NATION
Vapour cloud blast led to Andhra fire
≫ Page: 4 ≪

BUSINESS
Paytm stocks pare early gains; settle 3% lower
≫ Page: 7 ≪

SPORTS
$1.3B spending spree has left Chelsea vulnerable
≫ Page: 8 ≪

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سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in | www.magzter.com | 23 AUGUST 2024 | FRIDAY | BENGALURU | 17 SAFAR, 1446 AH | Vol 4 | Issue No 211 | Pages: 8

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In SC, CBI accuses WB cops of altering rape scene

CBI 'suspects' cover up as parents misled with varying accounts

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

CBI alleged in Supreme Court on Thursday that there was an attempt to cover up the rape and killing of a post-graduate medic at Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College and Hospital by the local police as the crime scene was altered by the time the federal agency took over the probe.

Appearing in the court on behalf of Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told a bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud that doctors of the hospital asked for videography, which means even they had felt that there was a cover-up.

"We entered the probe on the fifth day. Before that, whatever was collected by the police was given to us. The investigation itself was a challenge because the scene of offence was altered. The FIR was registered only after the (victim's) cremation at 11.45 pm.

"First, the parents of the victim were informed by the deputy superintendent that she was not well. Then told that she had committed suicide," Mehta told the bench, comprising Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra.

He further submitted that when a call was made to the Tala police station on 9 August, the doctors told the cops that the victim was unconscious, although she was already dead.

Appearing on behalf of West Bengal, advocate Kapil Sibal opposed Mehta's submissions, saying everything was videographed and nothing was altered at the crime scene.

During the hearing, Mehta criticised Sibal for allegedly laughing while he was pointing out the gaps in the registration of the FIR by the police.

"A girl has lost her life in the most inhuman and undignified manner. Somebody has died. Do not at least laugh," Mehta told Sibal.

Meanwhile, Supreme Court on Thursday criticised Kolkata Police for their "extremely disturbing" delay in registering the case.

The apex court, while directing the central and state governments to take immediate measures to ensure the safety of healthcare professionals nationwide, questioned the 14-hour delay in filing the FIR, as well as the reasons behind it, and scrutinised the sequence of events and timing of procedural formalities.

"Who was in touch with the principal of RG Kar Medical College? Why did he delay the FIR? What was the purpose?" the bench asked.

"How was it that the post-mortem was conducted at 6.10 pm on 9 August and yet the unnatural death information is sent to the Tala police station at 11.30 pm on 9 August? This is extremely disturbing," the bench said.

It directed the cop, who registered the first entry about the incident, to appear in the next hearing and disclose the time of entry. The bench said peaceful protests over the incident shall not be disturbed or disrupted by the West Bengal government. Chandrachud also said, "We have the actual autopsy report before us and we know what the 150 mg refers to. Please don't use social media to make your arguments," in response to misleading information in the public sphere.

Meanwhile, a special court in Kolkata allowed CBI to conduct a polygraph test on former RG Kar Medical College principal Sandip Ghosh and four other doctors. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

Citizens protest against the rape and muder of postgraduate trainee doctor, in Kolkata, on Thursday **PHOTO: PTI**

Protesting docs end strike after SC appeal

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

In a huge relief to patients, the Federation of All India Medical Association (FAIMA) on Thursday decided to end its 11-day strike on Thursday. This was soon after Supreme Court made an impassioned appeal to the protesting medics to resume work and directed the Centre to provide safety measures to them.

The court said judges and doctors cannot go on a strike since they deal with matters involving life and liberty. It further directed no coercive action against them.

The court directed the secretary in the Union Health Ministry to engage with the chief secretaries and directors general of police to ensure that the states and Union territories put in place certain basic minimum requirements for safety measures for doctors.

It also said the exercise of holding meetings should be completed within a week from Thursday The Federation, an umbrella body of doctors, RDAs of centre-run facilities such as AIIMS, RML and Lady Hardinge Medical College, and Delhi government-run LNJP, Maulana Azad Medical College, GTB Hospital and Indira Gandhi Hospital asked the doctors to get back to work.

The assault and murder of the junior doctor at Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College and Hospital has sparked nationwide protests.

The doctors had several meetings with the Union Health Ministry and demanded a fast and transparent investigation by CBI into the tragic incident, formation of a Central Protection Act and the implementation of safer conditions in all institutes and medical colleges. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

K'taka govt hospitals to have mpox isolation beds

VAISHNAVI GPOLARAJ
BENGALURU, 22 AUG

After World Health Organization (WHO) declared Mpox (Monkeypox) as global health emergency, Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao has instructed health officials to dedicate two isolation beds each at all government-run hospitals and healthcare centres if State reports an Mpox case. "Even if there are no cases reported in India, we have made basic preparations," the minister told Salar News.

>>>More on Page 2

Actor Vijay unveils TVK's flag 'Vaagai'

CHENNAI, 22 AUG

Popular Tamil film actor-turned-politician Vijay unveiled the flag of his political party - Tamizhaga Vetri Kazhagam - on Thursday and hoisted it at his party headquarters in Panaiyur. The two-coloured flag with maroon on top and bottom, has yellow in the middle with a motif of two fighting tuskers on either side of the Vaagai flower. The "vaagai" flower is also known as the Albizia lebbeck. The word "vaagai" means "victory" in Tamil. Though Vijay announced the launch of his political outfit in February, he chose not to contest the 2024 Lok Sabha elections nor did it support any party during the polls. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

NCP to join hands with Cong for J&K polls, says

SRINAGAR, 22 AUG

An alliance with the Congress is final on all 90 Assembly seats in Jammu and Kashmir, National Conference president Farooq Adbullah said on Thursday. The announcement came after Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge called on the National Conference leadership at Abdullah's residence. The three-phase elections to the 90-member Jammu and Kashmir Assembly will be held on 18 September, 25 September and 1 October. The results will be declared on 4 October. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

Hoax bomb threat leads to emergency in T'puram airport

T'PURAM, 22 AUG

A bomb threat message in the washroom of an AI flight from Mumbai that resulted in a full emergency being declared at the Thiruvananthapuram airport here on Thursday turned out to be a hoax, according to the police. The police also said that no explosive was found on the aircraft after an intensive search carried out by security agencies. The emergency declared at the airport in the morning was withdrawn around 12.10 pm, airport sources said, adding that all the 135 passengers who travelled on the flight were permitted to leave at 12.45 pm. Police have launched an investigation into the incident. —*PTI*

After collision, 2 in car chase biker to death

BENGALURU, 22 AUG

Two people were arrested after knocking down and killing a 21-year-old biker in a road rage incident in Bengaluru on Wednesday.

Vidyaranyapura police told Salar News that the accused Arvind, an employee of a private bank, and Chennakeshava, a civil engineer with a real estate firm, are charged under Section 103 (punishment for murder) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)." According to police, the car-borne miscreants chased the bike ridden by the deceased following a minor accident.

The incident, which has been captured on CCTV, shows the car aggressively tailing the motorcycle as both vehicles sped through a City street. Mahesh, a resident of Chamundeshwari Nagar, was riding a bike with two friends at the time of the incident. According to police reports, the trio were unemployed. The incident took place around 8 pm near Saptagiri Layout.

The two suspects were in a car. Police investigations revealed that at one point, Arvind, who was driving, honked and directed Mahesh to clear the way. . Mahesh reportedly didn't make way for the car. Subsequently, the car hit the bike from behind. a minor accident, there was no major damage to both vehicles. An argument escalated after this and it reportedly led to a road rage where the car chased down the bike and hit it from behind later. CCTV footage that went viral on social media showed the car chasing down the bike at high speed at night. —*Salar News*

'BWSSB IS SUFFERING'

Shivakumar hints at hike in water tariff in Bengaluru

DyCM DK Shivakumar inaugurates Cauvery water connections campaign in Bengaluru
PHOTO: MOHHAMED ASAD

BENGALURU, 22 AUG

The State Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Thursday indicated that a possible hike in the water tariff in the City is on the cards, as he highlighted the financial strains faced by the Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB).

Shivakumar, who is also the Minister in-charge of Bengaluru development, said the loss-making BWSSB has not been able to take up new projects, and even has no funds to pay power bills and salaries to its employees. "(BWSSB) is running at a loss, there is no money to pay power bills, there is no money to give salary. How to do things? There is no other option. We will look into it. We cannot hike tariffs for everyone, we may have to do it for some sections....no decision yet (on how much to hike). I will discuss in the Cabinet and with the citizens and do it," he added.

- Shivakumar in June too had indicated that a possible hike in the monthly water charges in the city is on the anvil.

Shivakumar in June too had indicated that a possible hike in the monthly water charges in the city is on the anvil. —*PTI*

CONG RALLIES BEHIND CM OVER GUV'S SANCTION

BENGALURU, 22 AUG

The ruling Congress Legislature Party (CLP) in Karnataka met on Thursday and expressed unanimous support for Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, after Governor sanctioned his prosecution over Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) site allotment 'scam'.

The meeting attended by Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, party legislators and MPs, also condemned Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot's action and accused him of indulging in politics at the behest of BJP.

"Party workers across the State are fighting in his favour," Shivakumar said. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 2

'RISK TO HUMANS'

Govt bans 156 drug cocktails over concerns

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

The government has banned 156 widely sold fixed-dose combination (FDC) drugs including antibacterial medicines used for fever, cold, allergies and pain, saying that they are "likely to involve risk to human beings".

FDC drugs are those which contain a combination of two or more active pharmaceutical ingredients in a fixed ratio and are also referred to as "cocktail" drugs.

According to a gazette notification issued by the Union health ministry on August 12, the government has banned 'Aceclofenac 50mg + Paracetamol 125mg tablet', one of the popular combinations used as pain-relieving medicines manufactured by top pharma companies. The list also includes Mefenamic Acid + Paracetamol Injection, Cetirizine HCl + Paracetamol + Phenylephrine HCl, Levocetirizine + Phenylephrine HCl + Paracetamol, Paracetamol + Chlorpheniramine Maleate + Phenyl Propanolamine and Camylofin Dihydrochloride 25 mg + Paracetamol 300mg.

The Centre also banned the combination of Paracetamol, Tramadol, Taurine and Caffeine. Tramadol is an opioid-based pain killer.

"The Central government is satisfied that the use of the Fixed Dose Combination drug is likely to involve risk to human beings whereas safer alternatives to the said drug are available," the notification said. It said that the matter was examined by an Expert Committee appointed by the Centre which considered these FDCs as "irrational". It further stated that the apex panel Drugs Technical Advisory Board (DTAB) also examined these FDCs and recommended that "there is no therapeutic justification for the ingredients contained in these FDCs". "The FDC may involve risk to human beings. Hence in the larger public interest, it is necessary to prohibit the manufacture, sale or distribution of this FDC under section 26 A of Drugs and Cosmetics Act 1940," the notification read. Following the DTAB's recommendations, the notification said that "the Central government is satisfied that it is necessary and expedient in public interest to prohibit the manufacture, sale and distribution for human use of the said drug in the country".

The list includes certain products, which were already discontinued by many drug makers. —*PTI*

The list includes certain products, which were already discontinued by many drug makers
PHOTO: PTI

India and Poland sign social security pact

WARSAW, 22 AUG

India and Poland on Thursday upgraded their ties to the level of a "strategic partnership" and inked a social security pact to promote the mobility of skilled workers following wide-ranging talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Polish counterpart Donald Tusk.

In the meeting, both sides vowed to significantly expand the bilateral defence and security ties with Tusk expressing Warsaw's eagerness to be a key partner in New Delhi's aim to boost domestic defence production and modernise its armed forces.

Modi arrived in this Polish capital on Wednesday, in the first visit by an Indian prime minister to Poland in nearly half a century. In the second leg of his two-nation trip, Modi will be in Kyiv for around seven hours on Friday. Following the talks, the two sides unveiled a five-year "Action Plan" for the India-Poland strategic partnership identifying a range of areas including defence, trade, agri-tech, energy, green technologies, infrastructure, pharmaceuticals and mining for cooperation. In his remarks, Tusk said Poland wants to expand its defence cooperation with India. To this end, they agreed to fully utilise existing bilateral mechanisms, including the Joint Working Group for Defence Cooperation.

"They reaffirmed their commitment to deepen India-EU strategic partnership, which would not only benefit both sides but also have a far-reaching positive impact globally," it said. They reiterated unequivocal condemnation of terrorism and emphasised that no country should provide a safe haven to those who finance, plan, support or commit terrorist acts. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

PHOTO: ANI

Tulu language, cultural fest on 24 Aug in M'luru

MANGALURU, 22 AUG

The All-India Tulu Federation, established for the development of Tulu language and culture, will hold one of the biggest shows based on Tuluva culture in Mangaluru city on 24 August. Nearly 46 Tulu service organisations across the country and some from abroad will participate as delegates and performers. Addressing a press conference on Wednesday, president of the organising committee, AC Bhandary said the event will be known as the Tulunad Folk Uchcha. According to him, on 24 August at 8.30 am, the Tuluvera Dibbana procession will be held from Mangalore University to the Town Hall, in which about eight folk art ensembles will take part. *—PTI*

NSE, BSE impose fines of Rs 5.36 lakh each on KIOCL

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

State-owned KIOCL on Thursday said stock exchanges Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) and National Stock Exchange (NSE) have levied penalties of Rs 5.36 lakh each for non-compliance. The bourses have imposed fines on the pellet maker for non-compliance with Regulation 17(1) of SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, that is, half of the company's board was not independent, for the quarter ended 30 June, 2024, according to a regulatory filing. "The company has clarified to stock exchanges that it is a government company and as per the Companies Act, 2013 and Articles of Association of the Company, the power to appoint Directors on Board of Directors of Company vests with President of India," it added. *—PTI*

BJP propagating false propaganda against CM: Cong

MYSURU, 22 AUG

Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) spokesperson R Lakshman has condemned BJP leaders for circulating false propaganda against Chief Minister's wife Parvathi over demanding alternative sites in a developed layout.

Lakshman denied the allegations of both BJP and RTI activists that Chief Minister's wife had distorted the documents by applying whitener in her appeal submitted to MUDA demanding alternative sites.

On Union minister HD Kumaraswamy statement that 62 cases were pending against Siddaramaiah, he said all those cases filed by Lokayukta against Siddaramaiah are related to administrative and civic issues. *—Salar News*

Cong MLC: Suspend legislature over MUDA scam

MYSURU, 22 AUG

MLC H Vishwanath on Thursday urged Governor Thawarchand Gehlot to keep State legislature and government under suspension over alleged irregularities at Mysore Urban Development Authority (MUDA). A former governor had initiated similar measures against Veerendra Patil-led government and dismissed his government, the Congress MLC said. This later paved for re-election and Bangarappa was elected as Chief Minister.

He said irregularities at MUDA increased after Siddaramaiah took over the mantle as the head of the State. He asked Lokayukta to file a suo moto case and conduct an inquiry against Urban Development Minister Byrathi Suresh as he took away files related to MUDA from the office on a helicopter to Bengaluru, he said. *—Salar News*

Mpox: State will set up isolation beds

2 isolation beds each will be set up at district & taluk hospitals, healthcare centres in State

VAISHNAVI GOPALRAJ
BENGALURU, 22 AUG

After World Health Organization (WHO) declared Mpox (Monkeypox) a global health emergency, Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao has instructed health officials to dedicate two isolation beds each at all government-run hospitals and healthcare centres if State reports a Mpox case.

"Even if there are no cases reported in India, we have made basic preparations," the minister told Salar News.

The isolation beds will be set up at district and taluk hospitals, primary healthcare centres (including 141 in Bengaluru) and community healthcare centres in the State. "The isolation beds currently dedicated for dengue and other communicable diseases will be used for Mpox cases if needed," Rao told Salar News.

In Bengaluru, Epidemic Diseases Hospital in Indiranagar will be a key facility for isolating patients and Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike has equipped the hospital with 10 isolation beds.

The State has only one testing centre for Mpox cases: Virus Research and Diagnostic Laboratory (VRDL) in Victoria Hospital, Bengaluru. Clinical samples from suspected cases will be forwarded to VRDL for testing which usually takes three to four days. Specialised teams consisting of dermatologists, physicians and other medical experts will be tasked to bring samples from across Karnataka to VRDL for testing. "We will start more testing centres across the State depending on the seriousness of the disease," the minister said. senior BBMP health official, who didn't wish to be named, told Salar News, "We are constantly in communication with airports, seaports and grassroots-level officials to monitor people coming from Mpox-affected countries. We have provided district administrations with a list of countries where the infection has been reported and instructed them to closely monitor travellers from these regions," he said. *—Salar News*

Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao said they are making basic preparations
REPRESENTATIVE PICTURE

> The isolation beds currently dedicated for dengue and other communicable diseases will be used for Mpox cases if needed
> -Dinesh Gundu Rao, Health Minister

When should you get tested for Mpox

- Rashes on mouth, hands, feet, perianal area or genitals
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Headache, muscle ache, backache, fever and fatigue
- Swelling inside rectum
- Pain or difficulty while urinating

Source of infection

- Coming in close contact with someone who has Mpox through, touching, talking, breathing, kissing and sex
- From contaminated bedding, towels, clothing, surfaces and other objects

Taking Care

- People with Mpox should follow the advice of their healthcare providers. Symptoms typically last 2–4 weeks and usually go away on their own or with supportive care, such as medication for pain or fever (such as analgesics and antipyretics)
- Those recovering at home have to stay hydrated, eat well and get enough sleep
- They should avoid scratching their skin and take care of their rashes by cleaning their hands before and after touching lesions.
- They should keep skin dry and uncovered (unless they are unavoidably in a room with someone else, in which case they should cover it with clothing or a bandage)

Govt to advise Guv over prosecuting HDK, 3 others

BENGALURU, 22 AUG

State Cabinet on Thursday decided to give "aid and advice" to Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot to act on requests seeking sanction for prosecution against JD(S) leader and Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy and three former BJP ministers including mining baron G Janardhan Reddy. Congress government's move comes within a week of the Governor granting sanction for prosecution of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) site allotment 'scam' on 16 August.

Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister HK Patil said: "Of the four cases that are pending regarding which we have given aid and advice, in two of these cases (Janardhan Reddy and Kumaraswamy) the charge sheet has been filed."

The Minister said, out of these petitions, special are against -- (former BJP Minister) Shashikala Jolle against whom application was submitted on 9 December, 2021 by Lokayukta police seeking prior approval under section 17 A of Prevention of Corruption Act (PC) Act, and (former BJP Minister) Murugesh Nirani against whom application was submitted on 26 February, 2024 for prior approval under section 17 A of PC Act.

The third is that of Kumaraswamy, against whom application was submitted on 21 November, 2023, according to which approval for sanction was sought section 19 of the PC Act and provisions of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), he said, adding, the Special Investigation Team had filed a charge sheet. The fourth pertains to Reddy, against whom an application was submitted on 13 May, 2024 seeking sanction under section 19 of the PC Act and provisions of BNSS, and a charge sheet was submitted in this case, Patil added. *—PTI*

HD Kumaraswamy *PHOTO: PTI*

WILL LOOK INTO DELETION IN CM'S WIFE LETTER: MIN

BENGALURU, 22 AUG

Amid Opposition charges of a cover-up and tampering with documents, Home Minister G Paramaeshwara on Thursday said the alleged erasure of a line using a whitener in a 2014 letter written by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife BM Parvathi to Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) will be looked into, if necessary. "The SIT or the investigation agency, will look into it if necessary," Parameshwara said.

In the letter, Parvathi had sought alternative land in lieu of her 3.16 acres on which MUDA had formed a layout.

Opposition BJP and JD(S) claimed that whitener was used to erase a line in which Parvathi specifically sought alternative land in the posh Vijayanagar Layout.

Siddaramaiah had denied any wrong doing. `*—PTI*

MUDA SCAM

Governor Gehlot is doing politics, says Shivakumar

CONTINUED FROM P1

The CLP meeting comes a day ahead of both Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar leaving for New Delhi to meet the party leadership to discuss the issue.

Shivakumar said senior legislator RV Deshpande proposed the resolution, seconded by another MLA Tanveer Sait, and unanimously supported by all legislators. "The governor is doing politics. We have unanimously condemned his decision to give prosecution permission (against the CM) without any proper inquiry under 17A (of the Prevention of Corruption Act)," he added. On 16 August, the governor granted sanction for prosecution of Siddaramaiah in connection with MUDA site allotment 'scam', giving a major jolt to the nearly 15-month old Congress government. Pointing out that the people of Karnataka blessed the Congress party with 136 out of 224 Assembly seats in the elections held last year, Shivakumar alleged that attempts are being made by BJP and JD(S) to destabilise the government which is working for the people. The BJP and JD(S) will not be successful, he said. "At any point of time, Siddaramaiah is our leader, he will be our leader," he added.

Meanwhile the BJP on Thursday held a statewide protest against the Congress, accusing its leaders of disrespecting the governor with derogatory remarks, They said Congress was "anti-Dalit", making a reference to the governor's caste.

It also demanded Siddaramaiah's resignation alleging a cover-up and tampering with documents, citing the alleged erasure of a line using a whitener in a 2014 letter written by his wife BM Parvathi to MUDA.

—PTI

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Dy CM DK Shivakumar and others at Congress Legislature Party in Bengaluru on Thursday *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

We need to develop our own infra, says Pralhad

BENGALURU, 22 AUG

India is blessed with talent, manpower and potential, so we need to go forward and make more in India, Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution and New & Renewable Energy Pralhad Joshi said on Thursday.

Joshi was in the City to lay the foundation stone for an Electric Vehicle (EV) testing facility at the National Test House (NTH).

"Technology upgrade is a must. We need to develop our own systems, our own infrastructure. Towards this goal, the first EV battery testing facility will be opened in my home State," Joshi said, speaking at the launch event.

NTH, which has been at the forefront of testing and quality assurance in various fields, operates under the Department of Consumer Affairs. He said plans are also on to establish EV testing facilities in Mumbai and Kolkata as well. *—PTI*

Pralhad Joshi *PHOTOS: PTI*

CID to file chargesheets in high-profile cases

DANIEL GEORGE
BENGALURU, 22 AUG

Criminal Investigation Department (CID) submitted a chargesheet to the local court in the superintendent suicide case related to the Valmiki scam case on Thursday. The 300-page chargesheet does not mention the names of any politicians from the ruling Congress, Chandrasekaran's death note implicated a minister from the Congress government in the case.

Meanwhile, Special Investigation Teams (SITs), probing several high-profile cases, are gearing up to file chargesheets soon. Director General of Police, CID, MA Saleem, confirmed with Salar News, that the SITs are in the final stages of preparing chargesheets for their respective cases while declining to disclose specific details. The Department has also been probing investment scams such as the IMA case through its newly formed Deposit Fraud Investigation Division (DFID).

Amid, Opposition BJP and JD(S)' demand for a Crime Investigation Bureau (CBI) to take over cases such as the Valmiki scam, the top cop emphasised the Department's commitment to swift and efficient investigations, citing its 70 per cent detection rate and 50 per cent conviction rate. He claimed that the investigations would be completed as soon as possible and that his Department worked overtime to meet deadlines.

Among the high-profile cases under CID's purview are the Belagavi stripping case, the murder of Neha Hiremath in Hubballi, the sexual harassment allegations against former chief minister BS Yediyurappa, and the alleged multi-crore scam in the Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation. "In 2023, we probed 903 cases. This year we have at least 385 cases with us," said Saleem.

To bolster its cybercrime investigation, the CID has partnered with Infosys to establish the Cyber Crime Investigation Training and Research centre in Bengaluru. This collaboration, supported by a grant of Rs 33 crore from Infosys Foundation, was instrumental in training investigators and promoting research in digital forensics. *—Salar News*

- The 300-page chargesheet does not mention the names of any politicians from the ruling Congress.

DA case: DKS appears before Lokayukta

BENGALURU, 22 AUG

The State Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Thursday appeared before the Lokayukta police for a probe in connection with a disproportionate assets (DA) case against him.

The Lokayukta police had in February registered a case against Shivakumar, following Congress government withdrawing consent to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to probe the DA case against him on 23 November, 2023, and referring the case to it.

Speaking to reporters after appearing before the Lokayukta, Shivakumar said: "Lokayukta had issued summons yesterday, I couldn't appear as I was on a visit to Almatti. So I had requested it for today and they had given me time today. For about three hours they have questioned me, they have inquired. I have answered them. They have sought for more documents, so I will submit them."

"After studying things", the Lokayukta will once again issue him a notice to appear, he said. "One thing is that CBI is better than them (Lokayukta). They are asking a number of questions and on different things. The CBI has not asked me anything yet, they haven't called me yet. But they (Lokayukta) have called me and are troubling me."

The Supreme Court on 15 July dismissed a petition filed by Shivakumar challenging the CBI's FIR against him in the DA case. *—ANI*

GAURI LANKESH CASE

SC dismisses plea against bail to accused

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

The Supreme Court has dismissed an appeal seeking cancellation of bail granted to Mohan Nayak N, an accused in the 2017 murder case of journalist turned activist Gauri Lankesh.

A two-judge bench of Justice Bela M Trivedi and Justice Satish Chandra Sharma while declining to cancel the bail granted to Nayak noted that he has cooperated with the trial and has not sought any adjournment so far. Mohan Nayak N was in custody since 18 July, 2018.

It, however, said the trial court shall expeditiously conduct the trial and all the parties shall cooperate with the trial court in concluding the trial.

Journalist Gauri Lankesh was shot dead outside her home in the City in 2017
PHOTO: PTI

"Under the circumstances, we are not inclined to interfere with the impugned orders passed by the High Court. However, it is directed that the trial court shall expeditiously conduct the trial and all the parties shall cooperate with the trial court in concluding the trial," the Apex Court stated in its 20 August order.

The bench said that if the accused doesn't cooperate or seek unnecessary adjournments in the case, the application can't be filed to cancel his bail.

The State government and Gauri Lankesh's sister Kavitha Lankesh had approached the Apex Court challenging the State High Court order dated 7 December, 2023, against grant of bail to Nayak, one of the accused in the case.

—ANI

- The accused, Mohan Nayak N, has cooperated with the trial and has not sought any adjournment so far, said apex court

PHOTO: PTI

Murmu gives away 1st-ever Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday conferred the first-ever Vigyan Ratna Puraskar -- India's top most science award -- on noted biochemist and former director of the Bangalore-based Indian Institute of Science Govindrajan Padmanabhan. At an award ceremony in the Ganatantra Mandapam of Rashtrapati Bhawan, the President also conferred 13 Vigyan Shri Puraskar, 18 Vigyan Yuva-Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prizes and one Vigyan Team award, marking the first investiture ceremony for science awards. The team of scientists and engineers who worked on the Chandrayaan-3 mission were honoured with the Vigyan Team award, which was received by project director of the mission P Veeramuthuvel. —*PTI*

No information on cabinet reshuffle yet, says CM Stalin

CHENNAI, 22 AUG

Amidst a strong buzz about a possible reshuffle of the cabinet led by him later on Thursday, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin said he has not received any such information. "I have not received" was the cryptic reply from the CM, accompanied with a smile when reporters asked him about "some information" being received about a possible shake-up of his cabinet. Media circles were abuzz on Thursday that the cabinet might be reshuffled to drop a few names and accommodate a few fresh ones, ahead of the CM's US tour next week to investments to the state. There has been a growing chorus in DMK for Udhayanidhi's elevation, ahead of next Assembly polls in the state. —*PTI*

SC asks farmers to remove tractors from border

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

Supreme Court on Thursday said it would soon form a multi-member panel to amicably resolve the grievances of farmers "for all times" and asked both the Punjab and Haryana governments to persuade the agitators at the Shambhu border between the states to remove their tractors and trollies from the site. A bench of Justices Surya Kant, Dipankar Datta and Ujjal Bhuyan, which posted the matter for further hearing on 2 September, asked the Punjab and Haryana governments to convey to the agitating farmers that the court as well as the two states are concerned about their issues and a forum is being constituted for the redressal of their grievances. On 12 August, the top court asked the Punjab government to persuade the farmers protesting, saying "highways are not parking space". —*PTI*

Feeling 'cheated', ex-Bihar minister Shyam quits RJD

PATNA, 22 AUG

In a setback to the RJD in Bihar, its national general secretary Shyam Rajak resigned on Thursday, claiming that he felt "cheated" in the party he had joined four years ago. Rajak, a former state minister and one of the most prominent Dalit leaders in the RJD, wrote a terse letter to party president Lalu Prasad, declaring that he was giving up the top post as well as the primary membership. He signed off with a cryptic Hindi verse, which could be roughly translated as, "I was not fond of a game of chess, hence got cheated. You kept planning your moves, I kept caring about our relationship." Rajak had also served as a minister in the government headed by the RJD supremo's wife Rabri Devi, but he quit the party in 2009, to join the JD(U), which had by then risen to power. —*PTI*

Didi writes to PM, seeks stringent laws

SC says don't politicise it, law will take its course

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

While Supreme Court asked political parties not to politicise the rape and murder of a trainee doctor at Kolkata's RG Kar Medical College and Hospital saying "law will take its course", West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi demanding stringent central legislation with exemplary punishment for perpetrators of rape.

She sought stringent laws and "quick justice" in rape cases. In the letter dated 22 August, she highlighted the "regular and increasing occurrence of cases in the country"

Citing data, Mamata Banerjee wrote, "...it is horrifying to see that almost 90 cases of rapes occur daily throughout the country."

She said the proposed legislation should also consider setting up Fast-Track Special Courts for speedy trial in such cases. "To ensure quick justice, trials in such cases should preferably be completed within 15 days," she told Modi.

PHOTO: PTI

Senior TMC leader Abhishek Banerjee called for laws mandating convictions in sexual assault cases within 50 days.

Clashes erupted in Kolkata between BJP supporters and police during a march to the state health department's headquarters in Salt Lake, led by BJP state president Sukanta Majumdar and Suvendu Adhikari, as protesters attempted to break through police barricades.

Police resorted to mild baton charge to disperse the crowd, and Adhikari was detained by police during the confrontation and was released later. —*PTI*

Accused is a pervert, reveals psychoanalysis

The psychoanalytic profile of the arrested accused in the rape and murder of the woman doctor at the state-run RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, Sanjay Roy, indicated that he was a pervert and severely addicted to pornography, a CBI officer said on Thursday. Quoting the doctors from New Delhi's Central Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL), the officer also said that the civic volunteer of the Kolkata Police has an "animal-like instinct". —*PTI*

'What's right to edu if schools not safe?'

Bombay HC blast cops over delay in FIR

MUMBAI, 22 AUG

Bombay High Court on Thursday called the sexual assault on two minor girls at their school in Badlapur "absolutely shocking" and said that there cannot be any compromise on the safety and security of girls.

Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray targeted Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, saying those who see politics behind the massive protests over the sexual assault are either abnormal or protectors of the culprits.

The parents of the accused in the sexual assault case claimed that their son was innocent and he had been framed.

Terming the sexual assault in the Badlapur school "absolutely shocking", a division bench of Justices Revati Mohite Dere and Prithviraj Chavan said that action ought to be taken against the school authorities for not reporting the incident despite being aware of it.

It also blasted the police over the delay in registering FIR.

NCP (SP) leader Supriya Sule and others during a protest over the Badlapur sexual abuse case, in Pune PHOTO: PTI

> **If schools are not a safe place what is a child supposed to do? What did a three and four-year-old child do? This is absolutely shocking**
>
> -Justice Revati Mohite Dere

The court had taken suo motu (on its own) cognisance of the incident where two four-year-old girls were sexually assaulted inside the school's washroom at Badlapur in Thane district by a male attendant on 12 and 13 August.

"Such serious matters where girls as young as three and four-year-old have been sexually assaulted...how can the police take it so lightly," the court said.

The bench directed the Special Investigation Team (SIT) set up by the government to probe the case to file a report by 27 August, and asked what steps it has taken about recording the statement of the girls and their families. —*PTI*

India can play vital role in Ukraine conflict: Polish PM Tusk

WARSAW, 22 AUG

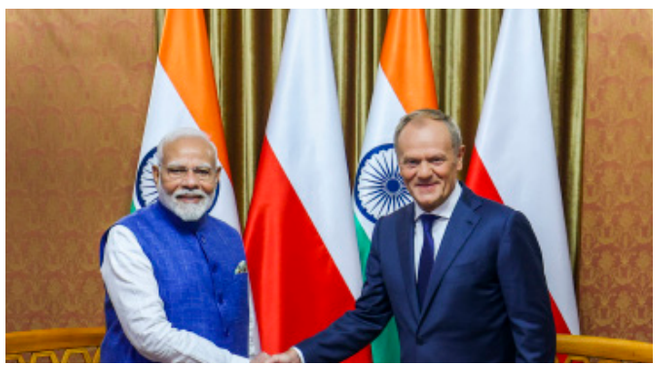
India can play a vital role in bringing a swift and just end to the conflict in Ukraine, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said on Thursday after he held talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is embarking on a historic visit to Kyiv.

In his media statement after talks with Modi, Tusk said that he and the Indian Prime Minister clarified their positions on issues that concern the whole world today.

"I am very pleased that the Prime Minister confirmed the readiness of his personal commitment to a peaceful, just, quick end to the war. We are both convinced that India can play a very serious role here, and a positive role," Tusk said.

"We are united in our conviction that India is capable of playing an important and positive role in this matter," he was quoted as saying by the Polish Press Agency.

Tusk said that this declaration had taken on special significance especially since Prime Minister Modi would be visiting Kyiv in several hours.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his Polish counterpart Donald Tusk during a meeting, in Warsaw, Poland, on Thursday PHOTO: PTI

"Regarding this visit, we are all convinced that it could be of historical significance," he said.

Tusk also remarked that Poland and India had raised their relations to the level of a strategic partnership. "These are not just 'words,'" he said. "At the core of this is our determination and readiness to cooperate in many areas."

He went on to say that the whole world admires India for the "consistently democratic nature of its governments," which, as he noted, was something that was not common in that part of the world.

Tusk also remarked that Poland and India had raised their relations to the level of a strategic partnership. "These are not just 'words,'" he said. "At the core of this is our determination and readiness to cooperate in many areas."

India has not yet condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine and has been calling for resolution of the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy. —*PTI*

AHEAD OF J&K POLLS

Alliance with Cong final on 90 J&K seats, says NC chief

SRINAGAR, 22 AUG

An alliance with the Congress is final on all 90 assembly seats in Jammu and Kashmir, National Conference president Farooq Adbullah said on Thursday.

The announcement came after Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge called on the National Conference leadership at Abdullah's residence.

"We had a good meeting, in a cordial atmosphere. The alliance is on track and, God willing, it will run smoothly. The alliance is final. It will be signed this evening and the alliance is on all 90 seats," Abdullah told reporters.

Abdullah further said, "CPI(M)'s (MY) Tarigami is also with us. I hope our people are with us too and that we win with a huge majority to improve the lives of the people." Questioned if the two parties had agreed to any common minimum programme, the National Conference president said there was no question of a common minimum programme. "Our common programme is to fight the elections to defeat the divisive forces that exist in the country," he said.

The former Union minister said he was very happy that the meeting with the Congress leadership was held in a cordial atmosphere. —*PTI*

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge with party leader Rahul Gandhi meets J&K National Conference President Farooq Abdullah and Vice President Omar Abdullah, in Srinagar, on Thursday PHOTO: PTI

> **It is our priority and also of the INDIA bloc to restore statehood in J-K as soon as possible. We had expected this could be done prior to elections, but it is okay, elections have been declared**
>
> -Rahul Gandhi, Leader of Opposition

Assam govt tables Muslim marriage, divorce act bill

GUWAHATI, 22 AUG

- Meanwhile, the autumn session of the Assam Assembly began on a stormy note with the entire Opposition staging a walkout on Thursday

The Assam government on Thursday introduced a bill to repeal a law to register marriages and divorces of Muslims, stating that it had scope to allow marriages of minors from the community.

Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Jogen Mohan tabled the Assam Repealing Bill, 2024 in the Assembly to abolish The Assam Moslem Marriages and Divorces Registration Act, 1935 and the Assam Repealing Ordinance 2024.

It hardly had any provisions for monitoring the implementation of the Act throughout the State and it attracted huge amounts of litigation in the court, he added.

Meanwhile, the autumn session of the Assam Assembly began on a stormy note on Thursday with the entire Opposition staging a walkout after the rejection of their three adjournment motions.

When their motions were rejected by Speaker Biswajit Daimary, members of Congress, AIUDF, CPI(M) and Raijor Dal went to the Well of the House with placards and shouted slogans in support of their demands.

Leader of the Opposition Debabrata Saikia raised the issue of exorbitant charges through smart metres, and AIUDF MLA Aminul Islam raised the proposal on the restriction of land sale-purchase. —*PTI*

11 Cong MLAs suspended in Gujarat assembly

GANDHINAGAR, 22 AUG

- Opposition party's legislators wanted to ask some short-notice questions on the second day of the three-day monsoon session, but Speaker rejected it

The Gujarat Assembly Speaker on Thursday suspended 11 MLAs of the main Opposition Congress for a day after they staged a walkout.

The Opposition party's legislators wanted to ask some short-notice questions on the second day of the three-day monsoon session, but Speaker Shankar Chaudhary rejected the demand.

The Congress legislators then staged a walkout in protest.

Soon thereafter, the Speaker suspended all of them for a day for shouting slogans and displaying placards in the House.

Earlier, Congress Legislature Party leader Amit Chavda and others displayed placards with slogans such as "give justice to Rajkot fire victims", "curb drugs menace", "take action against land mafia", "water supply scandal in Navsari".

Chavda claimed that party MLAs had submitted 12 short-notice questions to the assembly secretariat before the monsoon session started, but none of these questions were selected for discussion.

Senior Congress MLA Shailesh Parmar claimed that a question asked by party legislator Gulabsinh Chauhan about a controversial sale of agricultural land in Dahod was rejected by the Minister at the last moment. —*PTI*

'Naidu, Nitish might oppose Waqf Bill'

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

All India Muslim Personal Law Board president Khalid Saifullah Rahmani on Thursday claimed that TDP's Chandrababu Naidu and JD(U)'s Nitish Kumar have assured the Muslim bodies that their parties would oppose the Waqf (Amendment) Bill.

His remarks came at a joint press conference of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board, Jamiat Ulema-e-Hindi and other Muslim organisations where they asserted that they will launch a nationwide movement if the proposed legislation is not withdrawn and exhaust all measures within the ambit of law.

"We have met various Opposition parties. We also met Chandrababu Naidu, who assured us that 'we will oppose this bill'. We met Nitish Kumar yesterday and he also assured us that 'we will oppose this bill'. Oppn members question provisions of Waqf bill. The Joint Committee of Parliament on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill held its marathon first meeting Thursday amid objections by Opposition MPs over a host of provisions as the Union minority affairs ministry made a presentation in the proposed law. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

GEARS UP FOR 2026 POLLS

Vijay unveils TVK's 'Vaagai' flag

CHENNAI, 22 AUG

Popular Tamil film actor-turned-politician Vijay unveiled the flag of his political party - Tamizhaga Vetri Kazhagam - on Thursday and hoisted it at his party headquarters in Panaiyur near here.

The two-coloured flag with maroon on top and bottom, has yellow in the middle with a motif of two fighting tuskers on either side of the Vaagai flower.

The "vaagai" flower is also known as the Albizia lebbeck. The word "vaagai" means "victory" in Tamil.

Though Vijay announced the launch of his political outfit in February, he chose not to contest the 2024 Lok Sabha elections nor did it support any party during the polls.

Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam President Vijay unveiling of party flag at party headquarters, on the outskirts of Chennai, on Thursday PHOTO: PTI

"We will always appreciate the fighters who fought and sacrificed their lives for the liberation of our country, and countless soldiers who fought tirelessly for the rights of our people from Tamil soil."

The party took a vow to remove the differences in the name of caste, religion, gender, place of birth and also to create awareness among the people and strive for equal opportunities and equal rights for all.

"There's an interesting story of historical significance behind the (party) flag. I will explain it along with party principles and plan of action at the upcoming state-level conference," Vijay said, addressing the party workers.

"This is not a mere party flag. I see it as a flag of the victory of Tamil Nadu's future generations," he said. —*PTI*

Cong holds nationwide protests over Hindenburg allegations

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

Congress on Thursday held nationwide protests over Hindenburg Research's allegations against SEBI chairperson Madhabi Buch, demanding her removal and the formation of a Joint Parliamentary Committee to probe the Adani issue.

The Opposition party has been stepping up its attack on the government after Hindenburg Research launched a fresh broadside against market regulator SEBI chairperson Buch, claiming she and her husband had stakes in obscure offshore funds used in the alleged Adani money siphoning scandal.

PHOTO: PTI

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy demanded that BRS president K Chandrasekhar Rao spell out his stand over SEBI chief Buch's resignation and the constitution of a JPC to probe into alleged fraudulent practices by the Adani Group.

In Mumbai, city Congress unit chief Varsha Gaikwad said a JPC must probe the allegations by short-seller Hindenburg Research against Buch and the Gautam Adani group.

Congress workers in Rajasthan too held a protest under the leadership of state unit president Govind Dotasra. The party's Haryana and Punjab units held separate protests in Chandigarh led by the respective state unit leaders. Congress state units in Goa, Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Chhattisgarh also held protests to reiterate the party's demands over the issue. —*PTI*

Al Qaeda terror module busted in Delhi, 14 detained

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

The Delhi Police on Thursday claimed to have busted an Al Qaeda terror module after detaining 14 people from Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. After receiving intelligence inputs, an operation was conducted along with the police forces of the States, officials said. "The module, as per current state of operations, was being led by one Dr Ishtiyaq of Ranchi (Jharkhand), and it was aspiring to declare 'khilafat' and execute serious terrorist activities within the country." The members of the terror module were trained, including in handling weapons, at various locations, it said. Six people were detained from Bhiwadi in Rajasthan while they were undergoing training to handle weapons. *—PTI*

Illegal building of Ayodhya gangrape accused demolished

AYODHYA, 22 AUG

The district administration on Thursday bulldozed a shopping complex here belonging to Moid Khan, a gang-rape accused alleged by the BJP to be a member of the Samajwadi Party. Ayodhya police on 30 July arrested Moid Khan, who ran a bakery in Bhadarsa Nagar of Purakalandar police station area of the district, and his employee Raju Khan for allegedly raping the 12-year-old girl two months ago and recording the act. The incident came to light when recently a medical examination revealed that the victim was pregnant. The bulldozers started demolishing the shopping complex in Bhadarsa town around 1.30pm. Heavy security arrangements were put in place in Bhadarsa town to ensure that law and order is maintained. *—PTI*

Six killed, 22 hurt after bus falls into gorge in Ladakh

LEH, 22 AUG

Six people were killed and 22 more injured when a bus skidded off the road and fell into a 200-feet-deep gorge in Ladakh's Leh district, officials said. The bus, taking staff members of a school to a wedding function, fell into the gorge in the Durbuk area, Leh Deputy Commissioner Santosh Sukhadeve told PTI. The official said personnel of the district administration and police admitted the injured to a local hospital, where they were given first aid. Helicopters are being used to move the 22 injured people to the SNM Hospital and army hospital in Leh. The condition of two of those injured is critical, Sukhadeve said. *—PTI*

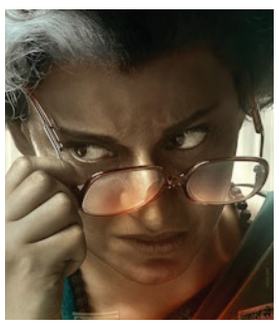


PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Gurudwara panel demands ban on 'Emergency' movie

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) has called for an immediate ban on Kangana Ranaut's film "Emergency," labeling it as 'anti-Sikh'. The committee has also requested that an FIR be filed against Ranaut, accusing her of 'character assassinating Sikhs' through the film's portrayal. Harjinder Singh Dhami, President of the SGPC, on his social media post stated that, "It is crucial to include a Sikh member in the Central Film Censor Board to prevent unilateral decisions that ignore Sikh perspectives. Despite repeated resolutions calling for such inclusion, the government has failed to act. The release of this film is likely to provoke significant anger and resentment within the Sikh community." *—Agencies*

Vapour cloud blast led to Andhra fire

CM grants ex-gratia of Rs 1 crore

AP Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu meets an injured victim of the Atchutapuram Pharma Company accident at Visakha Hospital PHOTO: PTI

ATCHUTAPURAM, 22 AUG

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday said that a powerful vapour cloud explosion caused the fire accident at a pharma unit here on 21 August, leading to 17 deaths and injuring around 40 workers. The Chief Minister said that the failure to follow Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs) by Escientia Advanced Sciences Pvt Ltd was clear and the chemical involved in the accident was an explosive one. According to Naidu, the explosion was so intense that it blew up several walls while workers were thrown on the walls and fences. Observing that security standards were also not properly followed, he said injured people suffered various degrees of burns with one worker suffering up to 54 per cent burns. From the accident spot, Naidu issued an appeal to all industrialists operating industries in the red category to take precautions and undertake immediate internal safety audits.Industrial sectors having pollution index score of 60 and above come under red category. Naidu called on industrialists to follow up the audits with necessary precautions. Expressing deep sorrow over the incident, he noted that this is what happens when a company does not take proper decisions, highlighting that Escientia was a red category company.

Earlier, Naidu visited the injured persons at a hospital in Visakhapatnam, and announced ex-gratia of Rs one crore to the kin of deceased victims and up to Rs 50 for severely injured workers.Though financial help could be extended, he said lost family members could neither be returned nor their void filled. *—PTI*

12 PEOPLE KILLED

17 lakh affected in Tripura flood

AGARTALA, 22 AUG

At least 12 people were killed and one was missing in landslides and flood-related incidents in Tripura since Sunday, an official statement said.

At least 32,750 people have taken shelter in 330 relief camps due to heavy rainfall, it said.

Following a request from Chief Minister Manik Saha to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, four additional NDRF teams arrived in the state to assist in the rescue operations.

"Due to excessive rainfall since Sunday, the water level in all major rivers has already crossed the danger mark flooding several areas. Twelve people killed in landslides and flood-related incidents since Sunday. Altogether 32,750 people have taken shelter in 330 relief camps", a government release said on Wednesday.

It said the northeastern state witnessed as many as 1,900 landslides causing disruption in road connectivity.

A red alert has been sounded in West Tripura and Sepahijala districts for heavy rainfall on Thursday, it said.

Personnel from Tripura Disaster Management Authority evacuate people from a flood-affected area following heavy rainfall in Agartala on Thursday PHOTOS: PTI

Chief Minister Manik Saha while speaking to the media on Wednesday evening said the flood in the state was "unprecedented".

"NDRF team along with relief materials arrives in Tripura. Relief materials & disaster management equipment have landed at Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya Bahadur Airport, Agartala & are being swiftly dispatched to flood-affected areas. Bringing hope & aid to those in need," Saha posted on Facebook.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday called up Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha to take stock of the flood situation in the state and assured him of all assistance from the Centre. *—PTI*

HEAVY RAIN LASHES PARTS OF R'THAN, MIZORAM

JAIPUR/AIZAWL, 22 AUG

Monsoon activity continued in Rajasthan on Thursday with heavy rain pounding four districts, including Kota and Ajmer, in the the last 24 hours, the meteorological department here said. According to the weather data in the last 24 hours till 8.30 am on Thursday, light to moderate rain accompanied with thundershowers was recorded at some places in western and eastern Rajasthan.

Rain activities will continue in parts of eastern Rajasthan till 29 August, the weather office said.

Meanwhile, schools in Mizoram capital Aizawl and Kolasib district remained closed for the third consecutive day on Thursday due to rain. *—PTI*

A panel soon for farmers' grievance: SC

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

Supreme Court on Thursday said it would soon constitute a multi-member committee to amicably resolve the grievances of farmers "for all times".

A bench of Justice Surya Kant, Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice Ujjal Bhuyan, which posted the matter for further hearing on 2 September, asked the Punjab and Haryana governments to give tentative issues concerning farmers to the committee. The Punjab government informed the top court that in compliance with 12 August order of the apex court, they held a meeting with the protesting farmers in which they had agreed to partially open the blocked highway. The bench asked the Punjab and Haryana governments to keep engaging with protesting farmers and persuade them to remove their tractors and trollies from the highway. On 12 August, the top court asked the Punjab government to persuade the farmers protesting at the Shambhu border since 13 February to remove tractors and trollies from the road. The court was hearing the Haryana government's plea challenging the high court's order asking it to remove within a week the barricades erected at the Shambhu border near Ambala where protesting farmers have been camping since 13 February. Barricades on the Ambala-New Delhi national highway in February after the 'Samyukta Kisan Morcha' (Non-Political) and 'Kisan Mazdoor Morcha' announced that farmers would march to Delhi in support of their demands. *—PTI*

MAN HELD FOR ALLEGED ASSAULT ON DELHI DOCS

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

A 56-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly assaulting doctors and misbehaving with nursing staff at the Jag Pravesh Chandra Hospital in Northeast Delhi, officials said on Thursday.

Israr, 56, who runs a spare parts shop, had taken his wife to the hospital for treatment on Wednesday night when he allegedly assaulted doctors, they said.

As the accused threatened the doctors and abused them, hospital staffers recorded it on their mobile phones.

According to the FIR, the accused's wife was given medication by the doctor on duty based on her complaints but her husband refused those and instead suggested his own mode of treatment, a police official said.

Dr Rajneesh, a junior resident at the hospital told PTI Videos that when the hospital staffers ignored the man's suggestions, he became violent and started misbehaving with the doctors.

Further investigation is underway, the police officer said. *—PTI*

B'desh floods not due to opening of Tripura dam: MEA

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

India on Thursday described as factually incorrect reports in Bangladesh that the current flood situation in certain parts of the country has been caused by the opening of a dam on the Gumti river in Tripura.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said floods in the common rivers between the two countries are a "shared" problem inflicting sufferings to people on both sides, and requires close mutual cooperation towards resolving it.

"We have seen concerns being expressed in Bangladesh that the current situation of flood in districts on the eastern borders of Bangladesh has been caused by opening of the Dumbur dam upstream of the Gumti river in Tripura. This is factually not correct," the ministry said.

S Jaishankar PHOTO: PTI

"We would like to point out that the catchment areas of the Gumti river that flows through India and Bangladesh have witnessed heaviest rains of this year over the last few days," it added.

The MEA said the flood in Bangladesh has been caused primarily due to waters from these large catchments downstream of the dam.

The Dumbur dam is located quite far from the border -- more than 120 km upstream of Bangladesh -- the ministry said in a statement.

The MEA said the two countries share 54 common cross-border rivers and river-water cooperation is an important part of the bilateral engagement. *—PTI*

Zee Media website hacked, accused of making fun of Bangladesh floods

Zee Media Corporation Limited official website has been hacked as the hacker accused the media of making fun of the flood situation in Bangladesh. The message that appeared on the website on ednesday, says 'hacked by Systemadminbd' and "Webserver seized by Systemadminbd" because Zee Media "made fun of situation in Bangladesh". Media reports said that Systemadminbd is a hackers group active since April last year. The group reportedly engages in cyber activities such as website defacement and has previously targeted websites in Bangladesh, India and Israel. *—Agencies*

Auto & taxi drivers begin 2-day strike in Delhi-NCR

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

Commuters in Delhi-NCR faced a tough time as taxi and autorickshaw drivers began their two-day strike on Thursday demanding better compensation from cab aggregator services. At some places, cab drivers and autorickshaw drivers were threatened and asked to deboard passengers. Taxi and auto unions said inadequate compensation coupled with aggregators launching bike taxi services has hit their livelihood. Eighty per cent of autorickshaws and taxis are off the road in the national capital, Delhi Auto Taxi Transport Congress Union (DATTCU) president Kishan Verma claimed and said around 14 unions are participating in the protest.

PHOTOS: PTI

People took to social media to complaint about delay in getting cabs and cancellations.

"Spent the last 35 mins trying to get a cab in Noida for Delhi. What's wrong with @Olacabs @Uber_India @rapidobikeapp," X user Prashhush posted. Delhi Auto Rickshaw Sangh general secretary Rajendra Soni alleged that drivers were being threatened. His union is not part of the strike. *—PTI*

NO BAIL FOR DRIVER, 4 OTHERS IN PORSCHE CASE

PUNE, 22 AUG

A court on Thursday rejected the bail applications of six persons including the teen driver's parents in connection with alleged blood-swapping in the Kalyani Nagar Porsche car crash case. Additional Sessions Judge U M Mudholkar refused bail to the 17-year-old's parents Vishal and Shivani Agarwal; Dr Ajay Taware and Dr Shreehari Halnor of Sassoon General Hospital, and alleged middlemen Ashpak Makandar and Amar Gaikwad. It is alleged that after the teen driver crashed his car into a motorbike and killed two IT professionals in the wee hours of 19 May. *—PTI*

Bodies of trainee pilot, instructor found; search on for missing aircraft

JAMSHEDPUR, 22 AUG

The bodies of the trainee pilot and his instructor who were on board the two-seater aircraft that went missing after taking off from Jharkhand's Jamshedpur were found in the Chandil dam on Thursday, officials said. The trainer aircraft, a Cessna 152, went missing after taking off from the Sonari aerodrome on Tuesday morning, following which a mega search operation was launched in the nearby areas, including the reservoir of the dam, they said. While the body of trainee pilot Shubhrodeep Dutta, a resident of Adityapur, was found in the morning, that of pilot-in-command Captain Jeet Satru Anand who hailed from Patna was found later in the day, they added.

Indian Navy personnel conduct a search operation to trace missing trainer aircraft near the Chandil Dam in Seraikela-Kharswan district on Thursday PHOTO: PTI

A 19-member team of the Indian Navy, which was brought in from Visakhapatnam, was continuing the search for the missing aircraft, though it was affected by inclement weather, officials said. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has started an investigation anto the incident. *—PTI*

GOVERNMENT TOLD

Submit Hema panel report in sealed cover: HC

KOCHI, 22 AUG

Kerala High Court on Thursday asked the state government to submit to it in a sealed cover the Hema Committee report on atrocities against women in the Malayalam film industry.

A division bench comprising Acting Chief Justice A Muhamed Mustaque and Justice S Manu, while considering a PIL filed by Thiruvananthapuram resident Navas, said the report contains serious allegations.

The court asked the government its next course of action based on the report submitted by the Hema Committee. The government lawyer submitted that it is not possible to register a case unless someone files a complaint.

Kerala High Court PHOTO: PTI

The State government said it has all the names mentioned in the uncensored original report which was a confidential document.

It is not possible to register a case against that confidentiality statement, the government said, adding that cases will be registered if someone comes forward and files a complaint.

The high court on Thursday on its own impleaded the State Women's Commission in the matter.

The PIL sought to publish the original report and asked the high court to direct the state government to initiate criminal proceedings in connection with the alleged sexual offences mentioned in the report. The Justice K Hema Committee was formed after the 2017 actress assault case involving actor Dileep, to study issues of sexual harassment and gender inequality in Malayalam cinema.

Earlier, the publication of the censored report, which was to be released on 24 July, was put on hold by Kerala High Court on a plea moved by a Malayalam film producer. Subsequently, HC dismissed the plea on 13 August and directed the government to make the report public within a week from then. *—PTI*

The Hema Committee report, which shed light on the power dynamics and exploitation of women in the Malayalam film industry, is not a testament of what the film industry is, but is rather "a small window on which women of the industry have to build solidarity to change the situation in our work space.

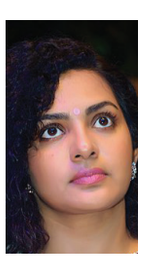
-Revathy, Actor-filmmaker

No matter what industry it is, we [women] are constantly being silenced. If you speak up, you get fired, you get demoted. You're constantly trying to balance your way through it.

-Lakshmi Manchu, Actor

Malayalam industry is so rotten inside. No, we are good inside, which is why we are fixing it. The places where you don't hear anything about, is where we should be worried.

-Parvathy Thiruvothu, Actor



PROTESTING WITH ART

Doctors and medical students of RG Kar Medical College and Hospital protest over the rape and murder of a trainee doctor by drawing graffiti on the streets in Kolkata. Several messages such as 'Stop rape culture' were written on the streets as the protests entered day 14 on Thursday

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Indo-Pacific on alert as Mpox detected in Asia

Once thought to be mainly contained to Africa, cases of Mpox (previously known as monkeypox) have been detected in Sweden, Pakistan and the Philippines over the last few days.

This follows the World Health Organisation's (WHO) decision last week that the recent upsurge in Mpox cases warranted it to be declared a public health emergency of international concern, highlighting the rapid spread of the virus and its potential for severe health impacts.

The last time this happened was in July 2022.

Of particular concern, testing has revealed the case in Sweden is the more virulent clade 1b subtype, the first time the strain has been detected outside Africa.

It's only a matter of time before mpox cases increase across the Indo-Pacific, although the WHO is stressing we know a lot more about this virus and how it spreads than we did about Covid-19.

Mpox is an infectious disease caused by the monkeypox virus, which belongs to the orthopoxvirus genus. This genus — or family of viruses — also includes the variola virus, the virus that causes smallpox.

The first documented case of mpox in humans was reported in 1970 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Since then, mpox has been classified into two primary clades: clade 1, previously known as the Central African strain, which is more virulent; and clade 2, previously known as the West African strain, which is generally less severe.

Historically cases of mpox were rare outside of Africa, however a significant global surge in cases began in May 2022 and has been followed by another increase this year, as the number of cases in Australia shows.

Mpox is an infectious disease caused by monkeypox virus, which belongs to orthopoxvirus genus ***PHOTO: WHO***

How does mpox spread

The transmission of the monkeypox virus occurs through several primary routes, with human-to-human transmission being the most significant. This transmission typically involves direct contact with the lesions or bodily fluids of an infected individual, particularly during intimate interactions.

Animal-to-human transmission remains a critical route, often occurring through direct contact with infected animals, such as rodents or non-human primates, particularly in regions where bushmeat is consumed. Vertical transmission from mother to fetus during pregnancy has also been documented.

The clinical presentation of mpox includes symptoms such as fever, lymphadenopathy (swollen or enlarged lymph nodes) and characteristic skin lesions. One good thing for now, is that people with mpox can only transmit the disease when they are showing symptoms.

Although Mpox is less lethal than smallpox, it still poses significant health risks, particularly to vulnerable populations.

Recent outbreaks and the global response

The emergence of mpox cases in non-endemic regions has raised concerns about public health preparedness.

Countries like Australia are enhancing surveillance and public health education to monitor potential cases and prevent outbreaks. China will be monitoring people and goods entering the country for mpox for the next six months, it announced last week.

This strain has been linked to higher mortality rates and increased transmissibility.

While the Indo-Pacific has been one of the regions least affected by mpox in the past, due to its interconnectedness and varying healthcare capacities, it could face substantial risks if the virus spreads unchecked. The appearance of clade 1 in Sweden indicates that the virus can cross borders easily, posing a threat to countries with less robust public health infrastructure.

Current treatment options

Vaccination strategies for mpox significantly differ between its two primary clades, clade 1 and clade 2, due to variations in virulence, transmission dynamics and outbreak contexts.

Clade 1, endemic to Central Africa, has a historically higher mortality rate of up to 10 percent and is primarily transmitted zoonotically — from an animal to a human — with limited human-to-human spread.

Where do we go from here?

The current global mpox outbreak has underscored critical lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly in the areas of communication, equity and preparedness. Effective responses require clear, empathetic communication to build trust and reduce stigma around the disease, especially among marginalised communities disproportionately affected by outbreaks. A coordinated government response is vital, emphasising collaboration across all levels of public health agencies to address emerging inequalities. The necessity of stockpiling vaccines and ensuring their equitable distribution has become evident, as seen in the challenges already faced during this mpox outbreak.

The most effective strategy right now is to send mpox vaccines to Africa to try and stop the disease from spreading.

Vaccination campaigns must be comprehensive and community-engaged to enhance uptake and address vaccine hesitancy.

—PTI

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR سالار

Global flood crisis to surge 49% by 2100, says study

A new study has predicted that global flooding incidence could increase by 49 per cent between 2020 and 2100 if the world continues to follow the ominous path of emitting greenhouse gases en route development.

The biggest increase in flooding incidence is projected to be around coastlines in tropical Africa and Asia, and in arid North Africa.

The North Atlantic and Indian Ocean coasts, as well as southeastern Asia and the Pacific Islands are likely to see the most pronounced effects, the paper published in Water Resources Research noted.

"With the highest resolution results produced to date, we hope industries will derive value from our model for a range of additional use cases, such as protecting critical infrastructure from future flooding, helping insurers price premiums and meeting the requirements of climate regulations," study's co-author Paul Bates, professor of Hydrology at the University of Bristol Cabot Institute for the Environment was quoted in a statement.

The study highlighted that it is important to note that previously used flood maps based on computer models were not very accurate at simulating the behaviour of real floods. So the team applied new techniques to gain more insights into how much water we need to put into the model for a given flood probability.

Bates and colleagues created a Global Flood Map (GFM), considering events induced by rains, rivers and sea level rise.

They used models to calculate the projected changes in rainfall, river discharge, and sea levels at a given level of warming.

They then adjusted the probabilities of a given magnitude of flood accordingly.

The analysis showed that flood risk for 2050 is seven per cent and 15 per cent if emissions are kept low and high, respectively.

"It is important to note that these global averages result from predicted changes in hazards that have large geographical variations. Some places will see their flood risk fall, whilst for others the increases will be many times larger than the global average even under a lower emissions scenario," lead author Oliver Wing, Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Bristol Cabot Institute for the Environment and Chief Research Officer at Fathom, was quoted. Further, the study highlighted that the world may witness a consistent and large change in coastal flood hazard globally. It is expected to almost double, increasing by 99 per cent by 2100 even in a low emissions scenario. This is because the mean ocean temperature will continue to increase even after global surface air temperature has stopped climbing. This causes the water to expand, leading to an increase in sea levels.

Also, river-triggered flooding is likely to occur in sub-Saharan Africa, southern, eastern, and southeastern Asia, and South America. Meanwhile, rainfall-induced flooding hazards appear to intensify and are especially vulnerable to human-caused climate change.

They are likely to increase by six per cent by 2100 in a low emissions scenario, and 44 per cent in a high emissions model, the study highlighted.

—PTI

The analysis showed that flood risk for 2050 is 7 per cent and 15 per cent if emissions are kept low and high, respectively ***PHOTO: ANI***

The world may witness a consistent and large change in coastal flood hazard ***PHOTO: PTI***

Surge in half-siblings worldwide thanks to UK's sperm exports

Sperm donated in the UK is being exported and can be used to create large numbers of children across multiple countries, contradicting a strict 10-family limit that applies in the UK, experts warn.

A legal loophole means that, while a single donor can be used to create no more than 10 families in UK fertility clinics, there are no restrictions on companies making sperm or eggs available for additional fertility treatments abroad.

With the lifting of donor anonymity and the ability to track down genetic relatives on DNA testing sites, this raises the prospect of some donor-conceived children navigating relationships with dozens of biological half-siblings across Europe.

Prof Jackson Kirkman-Brown, chair of the Association for Reproductive and Clinical Scientists (ARCS), is among those calling on the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) to tighten restrictions.

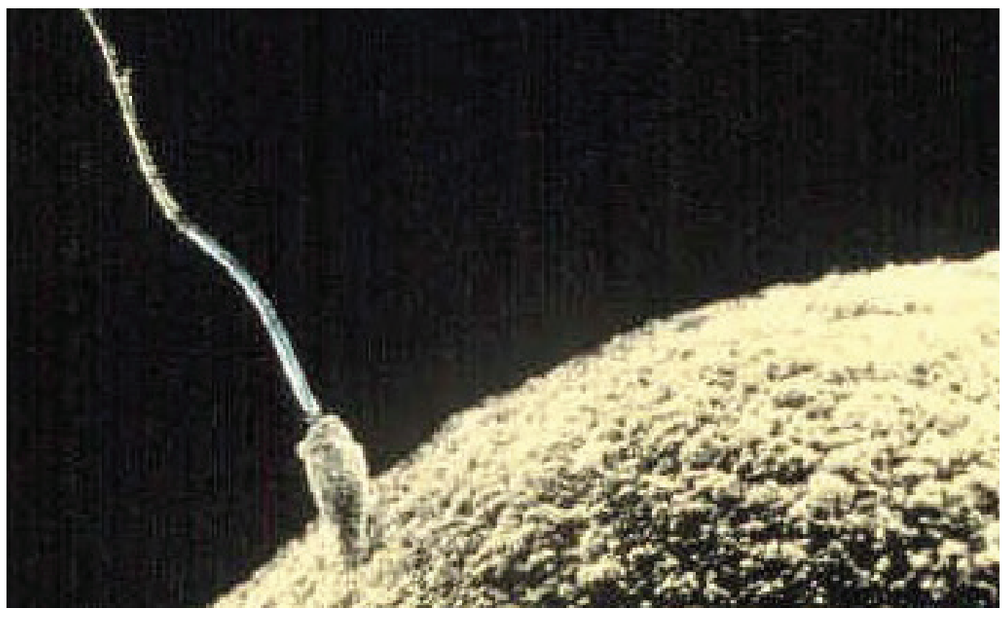
"If you believe that it's necessary to enforce the 10-family limit in the modern world then logically that should apply wherever the sperm are from," said Kirkman-Brown, who is also director of the Centre for Human Reproductive Science at the University of Birmingham. "There is data showing that some of the children who find the really big families struggle with that."

Until five years ago, the UK was primarily an importer of sperm, largely from Denmark and the US. But, as a growing number of international sperm and egg banks have opened donor centres in the UK, the picture is becoming more complex.

From 2019-21, 7,542 straws of sperm were exported from the UK, according to data provided by the HFEA (one IVF cycle typically requires one straw of sperm). The European Sperm Bank, which accounted for 90 per cent of exports, applies a worldwide limit of 75 families a donor and estimates that its donors help on average 25 families.

Cryos, the world's largest sperm and egg bank, which opened a sperm donation unit in Manchester in April, said it "aims for 25-50 families per donor" worldwide.

Prof Lucy Frith, of the University of Manchester, who is researching donor-conceived experiences, says that making contact with biological half-siblings is often viewed positively. "But when numbers of siblings began to grow [it] felt unmanageable to have contact and relationships with a growing and indeterminate number of people," she said. "There are no hard and fast figures of when the number becomes 'too much' and this depends on individuals, but generally over 10 was felt to be a large group."



The European Sperm Bank, which accounted for 90 per cent of exports, applies a worldwide limit of 75 families per donor ***PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA***

The potentially open-ended number of future siblings is another challenge. "Once you've frozen sperm it doesn't get any older," said Kirkman-Brown. In theory, a donor could continue to be used over years or even decades. "You can end up with donor siblings older than your parents, which is not somewhere we've been yet," he added.

Others noted that the increasing commercialisation of the market contrasts with the altruistic basis for donation of sperm and eggs, with the UK law only allowing compensation for time and expenses.

"It's presented to donors as a beautiful gift to help someone create a family, not as, 'We're going to maximise the number of births from your gametes and make as much money as we can from that,'" said Prof Nicky Hudson, a medical sociologist at De Montford University. "When you speak to donors and present these possibilities to them, they're really surprised."

Hudson is researching egg donation, which is emerging as a new market thanks to advances in egg freezing techniques and could expand further when compensation increases from £750 to £986 in October.

The shipping of eggs could open new frontiers for biological motherhood. "The idea of a dad to loads of children already exists in our cultural imagination," Hudson added. "We don't have that for women."

"Egg donors really strongly rejected the idea of their eggs being shipped abroad," she added. "One told me it's akin to human trafficking."

The rationale for enforcing the 10-family limit across licensed clinics, according to the HFEA, is that consultation with donors and donor-conceived people suggests this is the number people feel comfortable with in terms of the numbers of potential donor-conceived children, half-siblings and families that might be created.

"As the HFEA has no remit over donation outside of HFEA licensed clinics, there would be no monitoring of how many times a donor is used in these circumstances," said Rachel Cutting, director of compliance and information at the HFEA. Others suggested that this remit could be expanded, in a comparable way to the HFEA's mandate that overseas donors cannot be anonymous.

"The HFEA is limited by its statutory duties, but it could stipulate that it will only import gametes that meet the UK limit (10 families), outside the UK," said Frith. "So a donor who has donated in another country would have those offspring taken into account." "The HFEA's position that this is outside its remit is not good enough," said Sarah Norcross, director of the fertility charity Progress Educational Trust. "I'm not against there being more than 10 families if some are outside the UK, but 75, which some of these banks have alighted on, is a heck of a lot of relatives. Even if they say we can't control the number of families abroad, they could insist that the number is made available to the recipient."

Both the European Sperm Bank and Cryos said they expect to supply most of the UK sperm to the UK market, based on customer demand.

The European Sperm Bank added: "We follow this topic very closely and engage in dialogue with both donor-conceived individuals, families and expert groups to get more insights and a deeper understanding of their wishes and concerns."

—Courtesy, The Guardian

8 killed as heavy rains lash northwest Pakistan

PESHAWAR, 22 AUG

At least eight people, including two children, were killed overnight as heavy monsoon rains hit northwest Pakistan, officials here said on Thursday. Incessant rains lashed Dera Ismail Khan, Bannu, Mansehra and Mohmand districts of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) officials said. In Bannu, two sisters died when the roof of their house collapsed due to lightning. In a similar roof collapse incident in Dera Ismail Khan district, a mother and her minor son lost their lives. A girl child was swept away by gushing waters in Paharpur tehsil. While a woman died due to a rain-related incident in Mohmand district, two deaths were reported from Mansehra. *—PTI*

Pakistan arrests YouTuber who is staunch army critic

LAHORE, 22 AUG

A staunch critic of the Pakistan Army and YouTuber has been arrested here in Punjab province for allegedly fanning "religious hatred" and "defaming institutions" especially the military on social media, authorities said here on Thursday. The arrest of Orya Maqbool Jan, a known political commentator, comes a week after intelligence agencies allegedly abducted another YouTuber and comedian for criticising the Shehbaz Sharif-led government. The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) cybercrime wing said it raided Jan's residence in Lahore on Thursday and arrested him for stoking religious hatred against an "important personality" and institutions. Jan, a columnist, poet, playwright and former civil servant, has a following of over one million subscribers. *—PTI*

Botswana firms finds 2,492-carat diamond at a mine

GABORONE, 22 AUG

Botswana says one of the largest diamonds ever found has been unearthed at one of its mines and will be put on show on Thursday. The Botswana government believes the huge 2,492-carat stone is the biggest discovered in the country, and the second-biggest ever brought out of a mine. Canadian mining company Lucara Diamond Corp said in a statement Wednesday that it recovered the "exceptional" rough diamond from its Karowe Mine in western Botswana. Lucara said it was a "high-quality" stone and was found intact. It was located using X-ray technology. The weight would make it the largest diamond found in more than 100 years. *—AP*

PHOTO: LUCAEA DIAMOND

Blogger flags taped bins, broken seats in Pak flight

SKARDU, 22 AUG

A Pakistani travel blogger, Ali Khan, recently shared his harrowing experience of flying with Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) on one of the world's most perilous routes to Skardu. The airline, which was banned by the European Union in 2020 due to safety concerns, has been the subject of much scrutiny in recent years. Khan documented his journey on Instagram, detailing the subpar conditions aboard the flight. He described dirty seats, broken handles, and even duct tape on the overhead bin. Despite these concerning observations, Khan pressed on, eager to explore the breathtaking landscapes of Skardu. The flight to Skardu, a remote region nestled amidst towering mountains, is often considered one of the most challenging aviation routes due to its challenging terrain. *—AP*

Walz accepts VP nomination as DNC ends

Democratic National Convention barreled into its 3rd day with a lineup attacking Trump

CHICAGO, 22 AUG

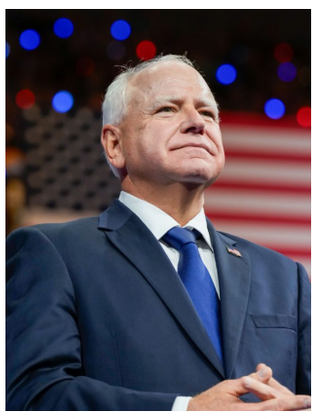
Minnesota Gov Tim Walz accepted his party's nomination for vice president on Wednesday and used his Democratic National Convention address to thank the packed arena for "bringing the joy" to an election transformed by the elevation of his running mate, Vice President Kamala Harris.

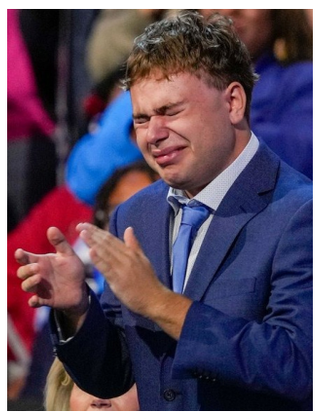
Democratic National Convention's (DNC's) kicked off its final night on Thursday.

"We're all here tonight for one simple, beautiful reason: We love this country," Walz said.

Democrats gathered at Chicago's United Center are hoping to build on the momentum Harris has brought since taking over the top of the party's presidential ticket last month. They want to harness the Democratic exuberance that followed President Joe Biden stepping aside while also making clear to their supporters that they face a fierce battle with former President Donald Trump.

Benjamin C. Ingman, one of Walz's old high school students, introduced the man many speakers — and Harris at times — have referred to as "Coach Walz."





Tim Walz speaks at DNC in Chicago; His son, 17-year-old Gus, wept from the front row shouting, 'That's my dad!' *X/ @GOVTIMWALZ*

> **Wherever I go and I see Indians, at the supermarket, on the street, everyone's like, 'You know Kamala Harris is Indian, right? It's like our thing we are so excited about, to have you running for prez**
> -Mindy Kaling, Actor

> **When a house is on fire, we don't ask about the owner's race or religion. We just try to do the best to save them. And if the place happens to belong to a childless cat lady, well, we try to get that cat out, too**
> —Oprah Winfrey

The Bill and Oprah Show

Walz's speech followed former president Bill Clinton who returned to a place he knows well, the Democratic National Convention stage, to denounce Trump as selfish and praise Harris as focused on the needs of Americans — firing up his party with his trademark off-the-cuff flourishes.

Clinton was meant to add heft to a third DNC night headlined by vice presidential nominee Walz 's introduction to a national audience.

The nation's 42nd president and a veteran of his party's political convention going back decades, Clinton was once declared the "secretary of explaining stuff" by Barack Obama, whose reelection bid in 2012 was bolstered by a Clinton stemwinder at that year's DNC. Now 78 — the same age as Trump — Clinton's delivery was sometimes halting, his movements slower and he mispronounced Harris' first name twice. His left hand often shook when he wasn't using it to grip the lectern. Oprah Winfrey, who long hosted her signature talk show from Chicago, picked up on one of Democrats' favourite themes of late, scoffing at Republican vice presidential nominee JD Vance having once derided "childless cat ladies" as he argued that Americans should be having more children. *—AP*

ROBERT F KENNEDY JR TO DROP US PRESIDENT BID, BACK TRUMP: REPORT

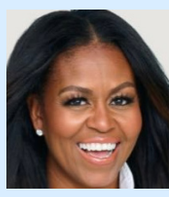
WASHINGTON DC, 22 AUG

Robert F Kennedy Jr is planning to drop his bid to become the next president of the United States and endorse Republican Party nominee Donald Trump, US media has reported.

Kennedy, the third child of liberal icon Robert F Kennedy, is considering announcing the end of his campaign during an appearance with Trump in Phoenix, Arizona, on Friday, multiple media outlets reported on Wednesday, citing people familiar with the matter.

The reports in The New York Times, CNN, ABC News and NBC News come after Kennedy's campaign announced earlier on Wednesday that he would give a speech in Phoenix about "the present historical moment and his path forward". *—Al Jazeera*

Michelle faces flak for 'suspicious of wealthy' despite $70M net worth



Michelle Obama said during her speech on the second night of the Democratic National Convention in Chicago that her parents "were suspicious of folks who took more than they needed." But critics quickly pointed out how she conveniently omitted that the Obamas have an estimated net worth of $70 million, as well as luxury real estate holdings in Chicago, Hawaii, Massachusetts and Washington, DC. *—Fox News*

IN RESIGNATION SPECH

IDF Chief takes blame for 7 October failure

Israeli tank and drone strikes in Gaza on Wednesday killed at least 17 people *PHOTO: X/@ABUJOMAAGAZA*

JERUSALEM/KHAN YOUNIS, 22 AUG

Israel's outgoing head of military intelligence took responsibility for his country's failures to defend its border on 7 October at his resignation ceremony on Wednesday.

Major General Aharon Haliva, a 38-year veteran of the military, announced his resignation in April and was one of a number of senior Israeli commanders who said they had failed to foresee and prevent the deadliest attack in Israel's history.

Israeli tank and drone strikes in Gaza on Wednesday killed at least 17 people, according to hospital staff and Associated Press journalists who counted the bodies.

In Khan Younis in the south, nine bodies, among them a woman and child, were rushed to Nasser Hospital. Meanwhile, the Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah received eight bodies.

The strikes in Deir al-Balah come as the Israeli military called for Palestinians in some parts of the central city to evacuate. Meanwhile, the Palestinian Health Ministry says three people have been killed in an Israeli strike on a home in the occupied West Bank. It said the apparent strike was carried out overnight into Thursday in the Tulkarem refugee camp, a built-up residential area dating back to the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation.

The UN humanitarian office is warning that mass evacuation orders by the Israeli military this month are pushing Palestinians into overcrowded and unsafe areas along the Gaza coast. *—PTI*

GREEK TANKER ABLAZE AFTER HOUTHI ATTACKS

DUBAI, 22 AUG

A Greek-flagged oil tanker traveling through the Red Sea came under repeated attack Wednesday, leaving the vessel "not under command" and drifting ablaze after an assault suspected to have been carried out by Yemen's Houthi rebels, the British military said.

The attack, the most serious in the Red Sea in weeks, comes during a monthslong campaign by Houthis targeting ships over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip that has disrupted a trade route through which $1 trillion in cargo typically passes each year.

In the attack, men on small boats first opened fire with small arms about 140km west of the rebel-held Yemeni port city of Hodeida.

French destroyer rescues 29 mariners

A French destroyer rescued 29 mariners from an oil tanker that came under repeated attack in the Red Sea, officials said, while also destroying a bomb-carrying drone boat in the area. Yemen's Houthi rebels are suspected to have carried out the assault on the Sounion. The Sounion is now at anchor in the Red Sea. —AP

Russian President Vladimir Putin meets Chinese Premier Li Qiang on Wednesday *PHOTO: X/KREMLIN.RU*

Putin meets China's Li amid Kyiv's attack

MOSCOW, 22 AUG

Russian President Vladimir Putin met with Chinese Premier Li Qiang on Wednesday, hailing growing trade relations as Moscow becomes increasingly dependent on Beijing for political and economic support.

"Our trade relations are developing, developing successfully," Putin said at the meeting in the Kremlin.

He also said that Russia and China have developed "large-scale plans" for economic and other projects. The meeting took place as Russia struggled to push back a Ukrainian incursion into Kursk now in its third week. And overnight, Moscow experienced one of the largest waves of drone attacks on the Russian capital since the start of the Ukraine conflict.

Russian news reports did not indicate whether Putin and Li discussed Ukraine.

Zelenskyy visits border area

President Voldymyr Zelenskyy toured the northeastern Ukrainian region of Sumy on Thursday in his first visit to the border area since his forces entered Russian territory more than two weeks ago. During a meeting with Military Commander, Zelenskyy said Ukrainian forces have claimed control of another settlement in the Russian region of Kursk and taken more Russian prisoners of war. *—PTI*

UN TEAM TO PROBE KILLING OF B'DESH PROTESTERS

DHAKA, 22 AUG

A team of UN experts is set to arrive in Dhaka on Thursday to set a framework for the fact-finding mission that will investigate the killings of at least 650 protesters ahead of and in the aftermath of Sheikh Hasina's resignation as the prime minister earlier this month.

The UN team is expected to discuss detailed terms and conditions for investigating all the human rights violations that took place between July 1 and August 15, the official said.

The delegation will stay here for at least a week and meet the civil society groups, victims of human rights violations, students and government officials and any other actors concerned, the official added.

Foreign ministry officials also confirmed the arrival of the three-member UN team. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

5TH BODY RECOVERED FROM SUNKEN YACHT OFF SICILY COAST

PORTICELLO, 22 AUG

Rescuers searching the wreck of a superyacht that sank off Sicily brought ashore a fifth body on Thursday, leaving one person still unlocated, as investigators sought to learn why the vessel sank so quickly. Rescue crews brought the body bag ashore at Porticello port while divers continued the search for the sixth missing person. No signs of life have emerged over four days of searching the yacht's hull on the seabed 50 metres (164ft) underwater. The Bayesian, a 56m (184ft) British-flagged yacht, went down in a storm early Monday as it was moored about a km (half mile) offshore. Civil protection officials said they believe the ship was struck by a tornado over the water, known as a waterspout, and sank quickly. *—AP*

Drones gut Russia's defence unit

KYIV, 22 AUG

A drone attack sparked a fire at a military facility in the Volgograd region of southern Russia on Thursday, regional officials and the country's Ministry of Defence said.

Regional Volgograd Governor Andrei Bocharov said on Telegram that a "defense ministry facility" was on fire after being attacked with drones in the area of Marinovka. There were no casualties, he said.

Bocharov did not specify what was damaged but Russian Telegram channels said that drones attempted to attack a military air base near Marinovka in the village of Oktyabrsky.

Ukraine did not acknowledge the attack but it comes as Ukraine has intensified its attacks on Russia, with a ground offensive into the Russian region of Kursk and drone attacks that targeted Moscow on Wednesday in what the capital's mayor called one of the largest done attacks to date since Russia's all-out invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Videos shared on Russian social media channels showed thick black smoke rising from the air base and an explosion in the night sky reportedly near the base. Marinovka is about 300 kilometers (185 miles) east of the Ukrainian border and about the same distance west from the border with Kazakhstan. The Baza Telegram channel, which is close to Russian law enforcement, said one drone was taken down several kilometers (miles) from the airfield and that wreckage from another fell on a trailer near the air base, causing it to catch fire. *—PTI*

Brazil plugs illegal route Asians take to US, Canada

SAO PAULO, 22 AUG

Brazil will begin imposing restrictions on the entry of some foreigners from Asia, who use the country as a launching point to migrate to the United States and Canada, the justice ministry's press office said on Wednesday.

More than 70 per cent of requests for refuge at the airport come from people with either Indian, Nepalese or Vietnamese nationalities, an official document says. The African nations of Somalia, Cameroon, Ghana and Ethiopia are among the remaining 30 per ecnt of refuge seekers.

The move, which starts on Monday, will affect migrants from Asian countries who require visas to remain in Brazil. It does not apply to people from Asian countries currently exempt from visas to Brazil.

US citizens and many European nationals also do not require visas for Brazil.

A Federal Police investigation has shown these migrants often buy flights with layovers in Sao Paulo's international airport, en route to other destinations, but stay in Brazilas a place from where they then begin their journey north, according to official documents provided to The Associated Press.

Starting next week, travellers without visas will either have to continue their journey by plane or return to their country of origin, the Ministry said.

An AP investigation in July found migrants passing through the Amazon, including some from Vietnam and India. Many returned to Acre state, on the border with Peru, as U.S. border policies triggered a wait-and-see attitude among them. *—PTI*

ELECTION LAW STIR

Indonesians storm Parl amid protest

JAKARTA, 22 AUG

Thousands of protesters attempted to storm Indonesia's parliament Thursday, tearing down a section of fence and throwing stones at police, and forcing the legislature to delay a vote on controversial changes to election laws that could further enhance the political influence of outgoing President Joko Widodo.

Parliament was to meet in an emergency session in order to overturn one decision made by the country's Constitutional Court on election procedures, while amending another.

Protesters held banners and signs, while others started a fire and burned tires.

The Constitutional Court court on Tuesday dismissed a challenge to an age limit that prevents people younger than 30 for running for regional governorships, which would prevent the Widodo's 29-year-old youngest son, Kaesang Pangarep, from running in a regional contest in Central Java. The court also made it easier for political parties to nominate candidates by cutting back a requirement that they hold 20 per cent of a local legislature.

Parliament passed an emergency motion to changing the minimum age to serve as governor to 30 at the time of inauguration and further ease nomination requirements on Wednesday, and planned to ratify the vote in a plenary session Thursday.

The moves triggered widespread condemnation on local social media and raised concerns about a potential constitutional crisis.

The legislature was forced to delay the vote after failing to achieve a quorum.

Widodo's eldest son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, is the incoming vice-president after the same court created an exception to the age limit for the post for former regional leaders, while Widodo's brother-in-law was serving as chief justice. He was criticised for participating in a case involving a close relative and later dismissed. *—PTI.*

Indonesian students climb a gate outside parliament during a protest in Jakarta, Indonesia, Thursday *PHOTO: PTI*

Gold remains flat for 2nd day; silver rises ₹200

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

Gold traded flat at Rs 74,150 per 10 grams for the second day in a row in the national capital on Thursday, according to the All India Sarafa Association. However, silver prices firmed up Rs 200 to Rs 87,200 per kg against Rs 87,000 per kg in the previous close on Wednesday. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity also remained flat at Rs 73,800 per 10 grams for the second day. Internationally, Comex gold traded at USD 2,537.80 per ounce, down by USD 9.70 while silver quoted marginally down at USD 29.94 per ounce in the global markets. Bullion market traders seem cautious ahead of US Federal Reserve Jerome Powell's speech at the Jackson Hole symposium, experts said. Gold and silver traded steadily and settled on a mixed note as the majority of Fed members agreed to cut interest rates in the next policy meeting, Rahul Kalantri, Vice President of Mehta Equities, said. *—PTI*

Rupee falls 4 paise to close at 83.94 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 22 AUG

The rupee traded in a narrow range and settled lower by 4 paise at 83.94 (provisional) against the American currency on Thursday, as relentless dollar demand from importers and relentless foreign fund outflows dampened investor sentiments. However, a positive trend in domestic equities and lower global crude oil prices supported the domestic currency and restricted its fall, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened weak at 83.93 and touched an intraday low of 83.97 against the US dollar. The domestic currency finally settled at 83.94 (provisional), 4 paise lower from its previous close. Meanwhile, the dollar index, was trading 0.19 per cent higher at 101.23. *—PTI*

Kalpataru Projects Int'l gets tax notice from GST Authority

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

Kalpataru Projects International Ltd on Thursday said it has received a tax notice from the GST Authority. The authority has demanded tax and penalty for the financial year 2019-20 on grounds of excess claim of Input Tax Credit, the company said in an exchange filing. "The authority has demanded to pay an aggregate tax amount of Rs 10.50 lakh and a penalty of Rs 1.50 lakh. Authority has also proposed to levy interest as applicable," filing said. *—PTI*

Singapore airline Scoot reviews new deals in India

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

Singaporean low-cost carrier Scoot is reviewing new opportunities and is keen on expanding network in India, which is one of its top markets, according to a senior executive. Scoot, the low-cost arm of Singapore Airlines, currently has direct flights connecting Singapore with six Indian cities namely Amritsar, Chennai, Coimbatore, Trichy, Visakhapatnam and Thiruvananthapuram. Brian Torrey, General Manager (India & West Asia) at Scoot, on Thursday said the airline offers unique pricing of tickets for Indian travellers, including those travelling beyond Singapore. The airline always reviews new opportunities in India and looks for expansion, he said at a briefing in the national capital. India is among the top four markets for Scoot depending on seasonality. According to the airline, the burgeoning middle class in India presents a significant opportunity as this segment can afford air travel. *—PTI*

Paytm stocks pare early gains; settle 3% lower

Zomato shares close at 257.8, down -0.83% on Thursday

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

Shares of Paytm's owner One97 Communications on Thursday ended lower with a discount of more than 3 per cent, giving up all the gains after the troubled fintech company said it will sell its entertainment ticketing business to Zomato.

On the BSE, the scrip of the company plunged 3.33 per cent to close at Rs 554 apiece.

Stock of One97 Communications fell 3.14 per cent to end at Rs 556 per piece on the NSE.

In the intraday trade, shares of the Noida-based fintech firm declined over 6 per cent to hit a low of Rs 537.95 and 538.35 per piece on the BSE and NSE, respectively.

In terms of volume, 2.11 crore equity shares of One97 Communications were traded on the NSE and 12.11 lakh shares exchanged hands on the BSE during the day.

In addition, scrip of Zomato went down nearly by 1 per cent to close at Rs 257.85 and 257.80 per share on the NSE and BSE, respectively.

The 30-share BSE Sensex rose 147.89 points or 0.18 per cent to close at 81,053.19 and the NSE Nifty went up by 41.30 points to end at 24,811.50.

On Wednesday, One97 Communications said it will sell its entertainment ticketing business to Zomato for Rs 2,048 crore.

Entertainment ticketing business, including movies, sports and events, will be available on the Paytm app during a transition period of up to 12 months, it said.

The deal, valued at Rs 2,048 crore, underscores the value that Paytm has created through its entertainment ticketing business, bringing choice and convenience to millions of Indians with its services and scale, the company added.

Announcing the deal, Paytm said it allows the fintech to strengthen its focus on core payments and financial services distribution. Paytm said with its strong focus on long-term value creation, the company remains confident in substituting revenue from its entertainment ticketing business by expanding core business areas of payments and financial service distribution. *—PTI*

Paytm sold the deal to Zomato for Rs 2,048 cr on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

WHAT IS THE DEAL?

- Zomato will acquire a 100% stake in One 97 Communications Limited's subsidiary's OTPL and WEPL, which operates TicketNew and Insider platforms which are entertainment ticketing of movies, sports and events.
- **Cost:** Rs 2,028 crore
- **Employees:** 280 employees from ticketing business
- **Time:** Within 90 days
- Shares of Zomato on 22 Aug **Rs 257.96 −2.07 (0.80%)**
- Shares of Paytm on 22 Aug **Rs 553.70 −20.35 (3.54%)**

AMID FIRM TREND

Sensex rises 147 points, Nifty ends above 24,800 mark

MUMBAI, 22 AUG

Equity benchmark index Sensex ticked higher on Thursday to settle at 81,000 level while Nifty closed above 24,800 following buying in commodity, telecom and consumer stocks amid a firm trend in global markets.

Rising for the third straight day, the 30-share BSE Sensex rose 147.89 points or 0.18 per cent to close at 81,053.19, registering gains for the third day in a row. During the day, it climbed 331.15 points to hit an intra-day high of 81,236.45.

Extending gains to a sixth session in a row, the NSE Nifty went up by 41.30 points or 0.17 per cent to end at 24,811.50.

Bharti Airtel was the biggest gainer in the Sensex pack, rising 1.63 per cent, followed by Tata Steel, ICICI Bank, Titan, Asian Paints and Ultratech Cements.

On the other hand, M&M, NTPC, Tata Motors, TCS and PowerGrid were the major losers.

In Asian markets, Tokyo, Seoul and Hong Kong closed with gains, while Shanghai ended in the negative territory on Thursday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) again turned sellers on Wednesday as they offloaded equities worth Rs 799.74 crore, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude rose 0.21 per cent to USD 76.21 a barrel.

On Wednesday, the 30-share index rose by 102.44 points to close at 80,905.30. The NSE Nifty went up by 71.35 points to end at 24,770.20. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

- Bharti Airtel, Tata Steel, ICICI Bank, Titan, Asian Paints and Ultratech Cements were among gainers

MOU SIGNED

Representatives of Dabur with TN CM MK Stalin and Industries Minister TRB Rajaa, on Thursday **PHOTO: ANI**

Dabur to invest ₹400 cr in South India's first plant in TN

CHENNAI/ NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

Home-grown FMCG major Dabur India on Thursday said it will set up a Rs 400-crore manufacturing plant in Tamil Nadu's Villupuram district, marking the company's maiden foray into the South.

State Industries Minister TRB Rajaa said, Dabur has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the state government to this effect on Thursday.

The MoU outlines an approved Phase 1 investment of Rs 135 crore, scaling up to Rs 400 crore over five years, Dabur India said in a statement.

The new plant set up in SIPCOT Tindivanam at Viluppuram district of Tamil Nadu would help Dabur to scale up its business from South India further, which currently accounts for around 18-20 per cent of its domestic business. The MoU was signed between Guidance Tamil Nadu, the investment promotion agency of the state represented by its Managing Director Vishnu and Dabur India CEO Mohit Malhotra in the presence of Chief Minister M K Stalin, Industries Minister TRB Rajaa, Chief Secretary N Muruganandam.

"Welcome to Tamil Nadu, @DaburIndia! In fact, welcome to South India! In the presence of Honourable @CMOTamilNadu Thiru. @MKStalin avargal, @Guidance_TN today signed an MoU with Dabur for the establishment of a world-class manufacturing plant, their FIRST EVER in South India, at the SIPCOT Food Park in #Tindivanam, Villupuram district," Rajaa said in a post on 'X.'

He said the company will invest Rs 400 crore in this facility which will create over 250 jobs. *—PTI*

It emphasised strict compliance with this directive **PHOTO: PTI**

FSSAI orders removal of A1, A2 milk claims

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

Food safety regulator FSSAI on Thursday directed food businesses, including e-commerce players, to remove claims of 'A1' and 'A2' types of milk and milk products from packaging, calling such labelling misleading.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) said these claims do not conform with the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.

In its latest order, FSSAI said it had examined the issue and found that A1 and A2 differentiation is linked to the structure of beta-casein protein in milk.

However, current FSSAI regulations do not recognize this differentiation.

"FBOs are instructed to remove such claims from their products," the regulator said, referring to food business operators.

E-commerce platforms were also told to remove these claims from products and websites immediately.

Companies have been given six months to exhaust pre-printed labels, with no further extensions to be granted.

A1 and A2 milk differ in their beta-casein protein composition, which varies based on cow breed.

The regulator emphasized strict compliance with this directive. *—PTI*

4 sectors hold huge investment potential for India, Africa

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

Four sectors - automobiles, agriculture, pharmaceutical, and logistics - hold huge potential for India and Africa to increase trade and investments, a top government official said on Thursday.

Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said that the bilateral trade between the two regions stood at USD 100 billion in 2022 and there is a need to target doubling this to USD 200 billion by 2030.

He said the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) has identified these four potential sectors - automobiles, agriculture and agro-processing, pharmaceutical and transportation and logistics.

In agriculture, he said that both sides can increase trade and cooperation in areas like processed foods and seed technology.

He added that India's pharmaceutical exports to Africa stood at USD 3.8 billion in 2023, and there are opportunities to increase the trade in the sector and provide affordable medicines and healthcare to African people.

Africa is a key player and supplier of critical minerals as these are fundamental for the green energy transition. *—PTI*

Jindal Group to invest $2.5B in renewable energy sector

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

BC Jindal Group on Thursday announced its foray into India's renewable energy sector, with a plan to invest USD 2.5 billion in the next five years.

With an existing portfolio of 1,200 MW thermal power generation in Angul, Odisha, BC Jindal Group has floated a dedicated entity to hold the renewable venture of the group, a statement said.

The group plans to invest around USD 2.5 billion in the renewable energy sector, in the next 5 years, the statement added.

BC Jindal Group, India's leading conglomerate, with over Rs 18,000 crore turnover, will oversee the renewable power generation and solar cells and module manufacturing businesses.

Jindal India Renewable Energy (JIRE) aims to generate 5 GW of power from solar, wind, hybrid and FDRE modes, to uphold responsible environmental care while achieving decarbonisation, it stated. *—PTI*

IREDA shares surge over 10% on fundraising plan

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

Shares of Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Ltd (IREDA) on Thursday surged over 10 per cent on the bourses after the company said its board will consider a proposal to raise up to Rs 4,500 crore through issuance of shares.

The stock of IREDA jumped 10.19 per cent to trade at Rs 263.30 apiece on the NSE.

On the BSE, it rallied 10.07 per cent to Rs 262.95. In the intraday trade, shares of IREDA advanced more than 11 per cent to hit a high of Rs 265.75 and 265.70 apiece on the BSE and NSE, respectively.

The 30-share BSE Sensex rallied 242.61 points or 0.30 per cent to 81,147.91 points, while NSE Nifty jumped 74.95 points to 24,845.15.

IREDA is engaged in providing finance to mainly renewable energy projects **PHOTO: PTI**

The Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Ltd (IREDA) on Wednesday said its board will consider a proposal to raise up to Rs 4,500 crore through issuance of shares in its meeting on August 29.

IREDA, under the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy, is engaged in providing finance to mainly renewable energy projects.

The fundraising assumes significance as India has an ambitious target of having 500 GW renewable energy by 2030 and needs to add about 50 GW capacity per annum to achieve the goal. *—PTI*

'PROFIT ROADMAP LAID'

Electric car plans off the table: Ola CEO

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

Newly-listed Ola Electric has laid out a roadmap to profitability banking on higher volume, vertical integration of supply chain and in-house produced cells, while it has shelved plans to make electric car, according to company founder and CMD Bhavish Aggarwal.

The company, which forayed into the electric motorcycle segment last week, will build products that Indians need, which are by a vast majority two-wheelers and three-wheelers, he said in an interaction with PTI editors at the agency's headquarters here.

In the first quarter of this fiscal, Ola Electric's automotive segment EBITDA was almost break-even but for a one-time reversal of about Rs 30 crore it had to pay for a change in standard operating procedure in the government for PLI rules, he said, adding the cell segment is at a different stage of evolution.

Ola Electric's net loss widened in the first quarter to Rs 347 crore, from Rs 267 crore in the corresponding period a year ago. In FY24, the company's net loss was at Rs 1,586 crore. He was responding to a query on Ola Electric's roadmap to profitability, as it remains a concern despite the company's share price almost doubling from the listing price of Rs 76.

Stressing that the cell is at the "centrepiece" of the roadmap to profitability, he said, "as our cell production goes into our own products, by early next year, there'll be a very sizable margin expansion because of that also."

Ola Electric has already announced plans to integrate its 'Bharat 4680' cell into its vehicles starting Q1 FY26. *—PTI*

Ola Electric has already announced plans to integrate its 'Bharat 4680' cell into its vehicles starting Q1 FY26 **PHOTO: PTI**

PhonePe launches 'Credit Line on UPI' for its users

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

PhonePe has announced the launch of its new feature, 'Credit Line on UPI,' aimed at enhancing the flexibility and convenience of transactions for its users.

According to PhonePe, this new offering allows consumers to link their credit lines from banks to the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) on the PhonePe platform, enabling seamless merchant payments and providing a new dimension to the digital payment ecosystem.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently broadened the scope of UPI to include pre-approved credit lines, a development that has paved the way for this new feature.

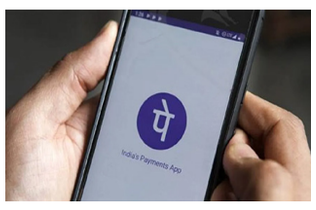


PHOTO: PTI

Known as 'Credit Line on UPI,' this innovation allows consumers to use their credit lines through UPI apps, increasing the number of merchants where credit lines can be utilised.

The introduction of 'Credit Line on UPI' enhances the payment experience by allowing consumers to make purchases across millions of merchants with ease. *—ANI*

PHOTO: X

Ronaldo's YouTube channel gains 10M subscribers in 24hrs

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

Portugal's seasoned forward Cristiano Ronaldo broke the record for hitting the fastest 10 million subscribers on YouTube. Ronaldo has been known for making history on the football field. But his accolades have started to spread off the field as well. Ronaldo became the quickest to reach 1 million subscribers on YouTube after opening his channel on Wednesday. According to Goal.com, Ronaldo broke the record by ousting Hamster Kombat. Hamster took seven days to hit the 10 million mark, while Ronaldo achieved it within a day. Apart from YouTube, Ronaldo a record-setting 636 million on Instagram. *—ANI*

Zaheer in talks with LSG for mentorship role

NEW DELHI, 22 AUG

Former India pacer Zaheer Khan is in contention to assume the mentorship role of Lucknow Super Giants ahead of the next season of the Indian Premier League. The 45-year-old was head of global development at Mumbai Indians (MI) and before that held the position of director of cricket for the franchise from 2018-2022. As a player, Zaheer has featured in 100 IPL games as part of three franchises -- MI, Royal Challengers Bangalore and Delhi Daredevils across 10 seasons, claiming 102 wickets at an economy of 7.59. "Zaheer Khan is in talks with Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) for a mentorship role with the franchise keen on bringing in a top former India player well-versed with T20 cricket to have a strong presence within their coaching setup following the departure of Gautam Gambhir," a report in ESPNcricinfo said. *—PTI*

Sathish loses in second round of Japan Open

YOKOHAMA, 22 AUG

Indian shuttler Sathish Kumar Karunakaran fought hard before going down in three games to Thailand's Kantaphon Wangcharoen in the second round of the Japan Open Super 750 badminton tournament here on Thursday. The 23-year-old Indian squandered a opening game advantage to go down 21-18 18-21 8-21 against the world number 40 Thai in a match that lasted 70 minutes. It was thus curtains for India in the tournament. Sathish had reached the second round after world number 3 Anders Antonsen retired after leading 6-1 in the opening game at the Yokohama. *—PTI*

Asian surfing C'ships: Kishore keeps hopes alive

MALDIVES, 22 AUG

Harish Muthu had to deal with the disappointment of finishing third in men's open category quarterfinals while Kishore Kumar qualified for the last eight stage in the U-18 category of the Asian Surfing Championships here. Both Muthu and Kishore are the first Indians to reach the quarterfinal stage of the competition, which is the qualifying event for 2026 Asian Games. Eight Indian surfers in four categories are competing at the event being held at Thulusdhoo here. Tamil Nadu's Muthu had stiff competition from Indonesia's Joi Satriawan and Japan's Kaisei Adachi who finished first and second respectively in the quarterfinal. Muthu was third with a score of 6.76, having finished second in Heat 1 of round three with score of 8.43 with two best scores of 5.33 and 3.10 in four waves to qualify for the quarterfinals. *—PTI*

$1.3B spending spree has left Chelsea vulnerable

It's $60m deal with Sterling in jeopardy as he wants to exit

LONDON, 22 AUG

In the years to come, the experiment unfolding at Chelsea under their American investors will be a fascinating case study in how to run a soccer club.

Because no one in England has ever seen anything like what has been happening at Stamford Bridge over the last two years.

Just take this in: Chelsea has spent nearly $1.3 billion on 39 players across five transfer windows since a consortium fronted by Los Angeles Dodgers part-owner Todd Boehly and Clearlake Capital bought the Premier League club from its longtime owner, Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich, for $3.2 billion in May 2022.

Throw in the club having four different full-time managers in this period — plus another coach on a temporary basis — and the revolving door at Chelsea, a six-time English champion and two-time European champion, simply hasn't stopped spinning.

This while already having five wingers in the squad, including one — Mykhailo Mudryk — signed for more than $100 million just last year and another — Raheem Sterling — who was the first signing of this unprecedented two-year trolley dash for nearly $60 million.

Sterling has been stripped of his squad number following the arrival of Neto and is one of around 20 players "training apart," Maresca said. Among them is striker Romelu Lukaku, signed three years ago for a then-club record of $135 million, and goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga, the world's most expensive keeper signed for $92 million.

With their background in private equity and venture capital, Boehly and Clearlake are coming at soccer ownership very differently and have moved the goalposts in their efforts when dealing with the sport's financial fair-play constraints.

According to the most recent accounts, Chelsea's owners reportedly sold two hotels at Stamford Bridge to another company they own — a deal that is being scrutinized by the Premier League. They've also been looking at selling a stake in their successful women's team to raise money. *—AP*

Chelsea players during practice session on Thursday in the ground **PHOTO: @CHELSEAFC**

PHOTO: X/@BCCIWOMEN

1st time in 90 yrs: India, Eng to script history at Lord's

LONDON, 22 AUG

The 'home of cricket' Lord's will host its first-ever women's Test to be played between India and England in 2026, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) announced on Thursday.

The ECB said on its website that after a three-match ODI series between India and England in July 2025, the former will return in 2026 for a one-off Test.

"I'm also delighted we can confirm that India Women will return in 2026 to take on England Women in the first-ever women's Test match at Lord's. It will be a truly special occasion, and one of real significance," ECB CEO Richard Gould said.

The iconic Lord's stadium in London will host a women's Test for the first time ever in 90 years in 2026 when England face India.

India and England will play three ODIs on 2, 4 and 7 September at Headingley, Lord's and Southampton respectively.

"It has also been confirmed that India Women will return in 2026 for a one-off Test match at Lord's — the first-ever Women's Test to be staged at the Home of Cricket," the ECB added.

"England Women have played white-ball matches at Lord's for the past three years, with another scheduled next year, but it will be the first time the ground has hosted a Women's Test match."

India have played nine Tests so far against England in their backyard from June 1986 with their last clash at Bristol in June 2021 ending in a draw.

"Young girls playing up and down the country can now aspire to play Test match cricket at the Home of Cricket. It is a clear demonstration that cricket is a game for all."

— Salar News with PTI

India's tour to Eng to kickstart from 20 June

MUMBAI, 22 AUG

The schedule for India's tour of England for 2025 was announced on Thursday, with the first Test set to take place from 20 June onwards at Headingley in Leeds.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced the schedule on X. "Announced! A look at #TeamIndia's fixtures for the 5-match Test series against England in 2025 #ENGvIND," tweeted BCCI. The second Test of the five-match series will take place from 2-6 July, while the third Test will take place from 10-14 July at the iconic Lord's Stadium in London.

The fourth Test will take place at Old Trafford in Manchester from 23-27 July, while the final Test will take place at The Oval in London from 31 July to4 August.*—ANI*

POST OLYMPICS FELICITATION

Former Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik on Thursday felicitated some members of the Indian men's hockey team that won a second consecutive bronze medal at Paris Olympic earlier this month; Manipur police felicitated weightlifter Mirabai Chanu and hockey player Sahnglakpam Nilakanta Sharma **PHOTOS: PTI**

CHESS TOUR

Sinquefield Cup: Gukesh survives against Praggs

SAINT LOUIS, 22 AUG

World Championship challenger D Gukesh survived by the skin of his teeth against compatriotRPraggnanandhaa, drawing a lost endgame in the third round of the Sinquefield Cup – the final leg of the Grand Chess Tour.

On a day when things finally livened up, tour leader Alireza Firouzja of France got lucky against his French teammate Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, drawing in a clear worse position via repetition of moves. Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan also pushed for quite some time. But, a blunder cost him dearly as Fabiano Caruana was able to turn the tables and score his first victory of the tournament.

The other winner was Ian Nepomniachtchi of Russia, who had a relatively easy win against Dutchman Anish Giri, who could not keep track after an unconventional opening by the former. Reigning world champion Ding Liren of China also created enough chances for himself against Wesley So, only to blow them away in no time.

With six more rounds to come in the 10-player double round-robin tournament, Firouzja and Nepomniachtchi now share the lead on two points out of a possible three. The event has a total prize pool of USD 3,50,000 apart from the Grand Chess tour bonus prize fund of USD 1,75,000,

Gukesh had a fantastic start as black pieces out of a Catalan opening by Praggnanandhaa, and the former was able to blitz 18 moves in about four minutes on his clock, with Praggnanandhaa an hour behind the clock. *—PTI*

After debuckle, Ahmed takes charge as new BCB Prez

DHAKA, 22 AUG

Former cricketer and chief selector Faruque Ahmed has replaced Nazmul Hasan Papon as the new president of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) after the incumbent resigned in the wake of the political unrest in the country.

The BCB held an emergency meeting on Wednesday during which the 58-year-old Ahmed was elected. Papon, who was in his fourth term, has been in London with his wife following the political unrest in the country which began with a huge student protest against quotas in jobs.

Faruque Ahmed **PHOTO: X**

The Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League regime was toppled as a result and there has been widespread violence despite an interim government taking charge.

We will discuss Shakib's situation

Shakib Al Hasan, who was a lawmaker in the Awami League, was cleared by Bangladesh's new interim government last week to face Pakistan in a two-match Test series.

"We will discuss Shakib's situation and whether he can continue under the current circumstances. We are also considering adding rules regarding player conduct during tours, including restrictions on endorsements," Faruque said.

Tamim Iqbal, who had a rift with Shakib, last played for Bangladesh in a home ODI series against New Zealand ahead of the 2023 World Cup but Faruque backed the opener to continue playing for a few more years.

The new BCB President also reiterated his stance on not retaining Chandika Hathurusingha as the national head coach. "I am not sure about the details of the contract with Chandika Hathurusingha. I am still in the same place I was before. I haven't deviated from what I said (I will not keep Chandika if elected as BCB president)," he said. *—PTI*

FORMULA 1

I'm close to end of my career: Verstappen

ZANDVOORT, 22 AUG

Heading into his 200th career Formula 1 race, Max Verstappen is clear he doesn't want to stick around for No. 400.

At the age of 26, Verstappen is the youngest F1 driver to reach the 200-race milestone, and he's doing it in front of his home crowd at the Dutch Grand Prix on Sunday. "No," Verstappen said bluntly, when asked Thursday if he could imagine another 200 F1 races — equivalent to just over eight more seasons — in his future.

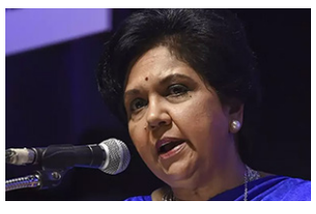
"So we passed halfway for sure, but it's been already of course an incredible ride," he added. "It doesn't feel like 200, but of course we're doing a lot of races now in a year, so you add them quite quickly." No driver has yet reached 400 races in F1, though Aston Martin's 43-year-old Fernando Alonso is set to mark his 395th race weekend at the Dutch Grand Prix. Three-time defending champion Verstappen has a contract with Red Bull through 2028 and isn't about to retire any time soon, but he seems unwilling to follow the example of Lewis Hamilton, who will turn 40 next year as he switches from Mercedes to Ferrari and is heading into his 347th race on Sunday.

One factor for Verstappen that could sway an eventual decision is the detail of the new F1 regulations being introduced for 2026. "Of course, '28 is still very far away," he said. "I'm not thinking about a new contract at the moment. I just want to see how it goes, also see the new regulations first, you know, if it's fun or not." *—AP*

At the age of 26, Verstappen is the youngest F1 driver to reach the 200-race milestone **PHOTO: X/@MAX33VERSTAPPEN**

ICC may get female chief as Indra's 6-yr term ends

DUBAI, 22 AUG



Indra Nooyi **PHOTO: PTI**

The International Cricket Council (ICC) is on the lookout for a new female independent director after PepsiCo head Indra Nooyi's six-year tenure came to an end last month.

The world body is also set to get a new chairman after incumbent Greg Barclay's refusal to seek a third term. Nooyi, who became ICC's first independent woman director in 2018, has completed her full term.

It is understood that ICC's all-powerful board has already started looking for a high-profile name like Nooyi, who was one of the most sought after names in corporate world. "The Board of Directors shall elect one individual who must be a female and who must meet the Director Eligibility Criteria to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusivity interests in the sport of Cricket are appropriately represented from time to time, and such individual so elected shall be a Director (the "Independent Director")," the ICC statute makes clear.

A source close to the all-powerful ICC Board was asked about the exact criteria for the appointment and he said that it could be any woman of eminence -- be it from corporate world or sports. *—PTI*